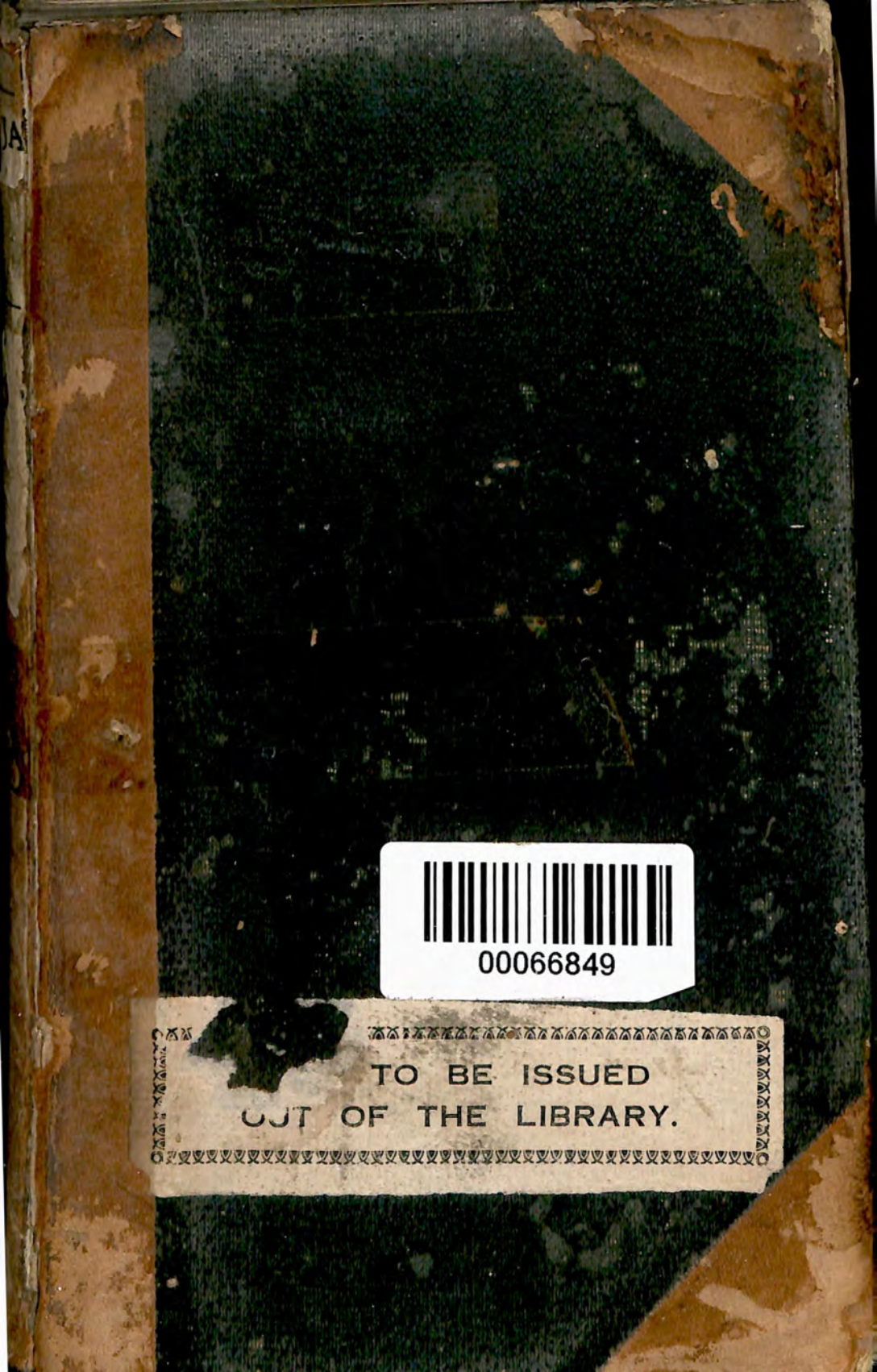
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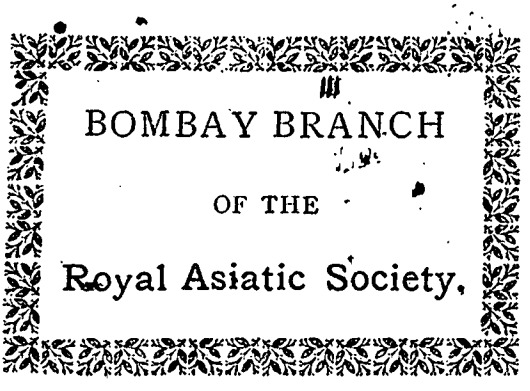


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THE

# WORKS

OF

# ROBERT HALL, A.M.

WITH A BRIEF MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE,

BY DR. GREGORY;

AND OBSERVATIONS ON HIS CHARACTER AS A PREACHER,

BY JOHN FOSTER.

66849

PUBLISHED UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF

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A. d.

## VOL. II.

WORKS ON TERMS OF COMMUNION,

AND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

AND THE BAPTISM OF JOHN.

THIRD EDITION.

LONDON:

HOLDSWORTH AND BALL,

AMEN CORNER, PATERNOSTER ROW.

M DCCC XXXIV.

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"What charter hath Christ given the church to bind men up to, more than himself hath done? or to exclude those from her society who may be admitted into heaven? Will Christ ever thank men at the great day for keeping such out from communion with his church, whom he will vouchsafe not only crowns of glory to, but it may be *aureolæ* too, if there be any such things there? The grand commission the apostles were sent out with, was only *to teach what Christ had commanded them.* Not the least intimation of any power given them to impose or require any thing beyond what himself had spoken to them, or they were directed to by the immediate guidance of the Spirit of God."

STILLINGFLEET; IRENICUM.

ON

# TERMS OF COMMUNION,

WITH A

PARTICULAR VIEW TO THE CASE

OF

## THE BAPTISTS AND PÆDOBAPTISTS

---

[PUBLISHED IN 1815.]

# PREFACE.

THE love of controversy was in no degree the motive for writing the following sheets. Controversy the writer considers as an evil, though often a necessary one. It is to be deprecated when it is directed to minute or frivolous objects, or when it is managed in such a manner as to call forth malevolent passions. He hopes the ensuing treatise will be found free from both these objections, and that, as the subject must be allowed to be of some importance, so the spirit in which it is handled, is not chargeable with any material departure from the christian temper. If the author has expressed himself on some occasions with considerable confidence, he trusts the reader will impute it, not to a forgetfulness of his personal deficiencies, but to the cause he has undertaken to support. The divided state of the christian world has long been the subject of painful reflection; and if his feeble efforts might be the means of uniting a small portion only of it in closer ties, he will feel himself amply rewarded.

The practice of incorporating private opinions and human inventions with the constitution of a

church, and with the terms of communion, has long appeared to him untenable in its principle, and pernicious in its effects. There is no position in the whole compass of theology, of the truth of which he feels a stronger persuasion, than that no man, or set of men, are entitled to prescribe, as an indispensable condition of communion, what the New Testament has not enjoined as a condition of salvation. To establish this position is the principal object of the following work; and though it is more immediately occupied in the discussion of a case which respects the baptists and pædo-baptists, that case is attempted to be decided entirely upon the principle now mentioned, and is no more than the application of it to a particular instance.

The writer is persuaded that a departure from this principle in the denomination to which he belongs, has been extremely injurious not only to the credit and prosperity of that particular body, (which is a very subordinate consideration,) but to the general interests of truth; and that, but for the obstruction arising from that quarter, the views they entertain of one of the sacraments would have obtained a more extensive prevalence. By keeping themselves in a state of separation and seclusion from other christians, they have not only evinced an inattention to some of the most important injunctions of scripture, but have raised up an invincible barrier to the propagation of their sentiments beyond the precincts of their own party.

It has been insinuated that the author has taken an unfair advantage of his opponents, by choosing to bring forward this disquisition, just at the moment when we have to lament the loss of a person whose judgement would have disposed, and his abilities enabled him to do ample justice to the opposite side of the question. He can assure his readers, that none entertained a higher veneration for Mr. Fuller than himself, notwithstanding their difference of sentiment on this subject; and that, when he entered on this discussion, it was with the fullest expectation of having his opposition to encounter. At that time his state of health, though not good, was such as suggested a hope that the event was very distant which we all deplore.

Having been led to mention this affecting circumstance, I cannot refrain from expressing in a few words the sentiments of affectionate veneration with which I also regarded that excellent person while living, and cherish his memory now that he is no more: a man, whose sagacity enabled him to penetrate to the depth of every subject he explored, whose conceptions were so powerful and luminous, that what was recondite and original appeared familiar; what was intricate, easy and perspicuous in his hands; equally successful in enforcing the practical, in stating the theoretical, and discussing the polemical branches of theology: without the advantage of early education, he rose to high distinction amongst the religious writers of his day, and, in the midst of a most active

and laborious life, left monuments of his piety and genius which will survive to distant posterity. Were I making his eulogium, I should necessarily dwell on the spotless integrity of his private life, his fidelity in friendship, his neglect of self-interest, his ardent attachment to truth, and especially the series of unceasing labours and exertions in superintending the mission to India, to which he most probably fell a victim. He had nothing feeble or undecisive in his character, but to every undertaking in which he engaged, he brought all the powers of his understanding, all the energies of his heart; and if he were less distinguished by the comprehension, than the acumen and solidity of his thoughts; less eminent for the gentler graces, than for stern integrity and native grandeur of mind, we have only to remember the necessary limitations of human excellence. While he endeared himself to his denomination by a long course of most useful labour; by his excellent works on the Socinian and deistical controversies, as well as his devotion to the cause of missions, he laid the world under lasting obligations. Though he was known to profess different views from the writer on the subject under present discussion, it may be inferred from a *decisive fact,* which it is not necessary to record, that his attachment to them was not very strong, nor his conviction probably very powerful. Be this as it may, his sanction of the practice of exclusive communion, has no doubt contributed in no small degree to recom-

mend it to the denomination of which he was so distinguished an ornament. They who are the first to disclaim human authority in the affairs of religion, are not always least susceptible of its influence.

It is observable also, that bodies of men are very slow in changing their opinions; which, with some inconveniencies, is productive of this advantage, that truth undergoes a severer investigation, and her conquests are the more permanent for being gradually acquired. On this account the writer is not so sanguine as to expect his performance will occasion any sudden revolution in the sentiments and practice of the class of christians more immediately concerned; if, along with other causes, it ultimately contribute to so desirable an issue, he will be satisfied.

It may not be improper to assign the reason for not noticing the treatise of the celebrated Mr. Robinson, of Cambridge, on the same subject. It is not because he is insensible to the ingenuity and beauty of that performance, as well as of the other works of that original and extraordinary writer; but because it rests on principles more lax and latitudinarian, than it is in his power conscientiously to adopt; Mr. R. not having adverted, as far as he perceives, to the distinction of fundamentals, but constructed his plea for toleration* in

* The intelligent reader will understand me to refer, not to civil toleration by the state, but to that which is exercised by religious societies.

such a manner, as to comprehend all the varieties of religious belief.

The only author I have professed to answer is the late venerable Booth, his treatise being generally considered by our opponents as the ablest defence of their hypothesis.

I have only to add, that I commit the following treatise to the candour of the public, and the blessing of God; hoping that, as it is designed not to excite but to allay animosities, not to widen but to heal the breaches among christians, it will meet with the indulgence due to good intentions, however feebly executed.

# ON TERMS OF COMMUNION.

## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

WHOEVER forms his ideas of the Church of Christ from an attentive perusal of the New Testament, will perceive that *unity* is one of its essential characteristics; and that, though it be branched out into many distinct societies, it is still but one. "The Church," says Cyprian, "is one, which by reason of its fecundity is extended into a multitude, in the same manner as the rays of the sun, however numerous, constitute but one light; and the branches of a tree, however many, are attached to one trunk, which is supported by its tenacious root; and when various rivers flow from the same fountain, though number is diffused by the redundant supply of waters, unity is preserved in their origin." Nothing more abhorrent from the principles and maxims of the sacred oracles can be conceived, than the idea of a plurality of true churches, neither in actual communion with each other, nor in a capacity for such communion. Though this rending of the seamless garment of our Saviour, this schism in the members of his mystical body, is by far the greatest calamity

which has befallen the christian interest, and one of the most fatal effects of the great apostasy foretold by the sacred penmen, we have been so long familiarized to it as to be scarcely sensible of its enormity; nor does it excite surprise or concern, in any degree proportioned to what would be felt by one who had contemplated the church in the first ages. Christian societies, regarding each other with the jealousies of rival empires, each aiming to raise itself on the ruin of all others, making extravagant boasts of superior purity, generally in exact proportion to their departures from it, and scarcely deigning to acknowledge the possibility of obtaining salvation out of their pale, form the odious and disgusting spectacle which modern christianity presents. The bond of charity, which unites the genuine followers of Christ in distinction from the world, is dissolved, and the very terms by which it was wont to be denoted, exclusively employed to express a predilection for a sect. The evils which result from this state of division are incalculable: it supplies infidels with their most plausible topics of invective; it hardens the consciences of the irreligious, weakens the hands of the good, impedes the efficacy of prayer, and is probably the principal obstruction to that ample diffusion of the Spirit which is essential to the renovation of the world.

It is easier however, it is confessed, to deplore the malady, than to prescribe the cure: for, however important the preservation of harmony and

peace, the interests of truth and holiness are still more so; nor must we forget the order in which the graces of the Spirit are arranged. "The wisdom which is from above is first *pure*, then *peaceable*." Peace should be anxiously sought, but always in subordination to purity; and therefore every attempt to reconcile the differences among christians which involves the sacrifice of truth, or the least deliberate deviation from the revealed will of Christ, is spurious in its origin, and dangerous in its tendency. If communion with a christian society cannot be had without a compliance with rites and usages which we deem idolatrous or superstitious, or without a surrender of that liberty in which we are commanded to stand fast, we must, as we value our allegiance, forego, however reluctantly, the advantages of such a union. Wherever purity and simplicity of worship are violated by the heterogeneous mixture of human inventions, we are not at liberty to comply with them for the sake of peace, because the first consideration, in every act of worship, is its correspondence with the revealed will of God, which will often justify us in declining the *external* communion of a church with which we cease not to cultivate a communion in spirit. It is one thing to decline a connexion with the members of a community *absolutely*, or simply because they belong to such a community, and another to join with them in practices which we deem superstitious and erroneous. In the latter instance, we cannot be said absolutely to refuse a

connexion with the pious part of such societies, we decline it merely because it is clogged with conditions which render it impracticable. It is impossible for a protestant dissenter, for example, without manifest inconsistency, to become a member of the established church; but to admit the members of that community to participate at the Lord's table, without demanding a formal renunciation of their peculiar sentiments, includes nothing contradictory or repugnant. The cases are totally distinct, and the reasons which would apply forcibly against the former, would be irrelevant to the latter. In the first supposition, the dissenter, by an active concurrence in what he professes to disapprove, ceases to dissent; in the last, no principle is violated, no practice is altered, no innovation is introduced.

Hence arises a question, how far we are justified in repelling from our communion those from whom we differ on matters confessedly not essential to salvation, when that communion is accompanied with no innovation in the rites of worship, merely on account of a diversity of sentiment on other subjects. In other words, are we at liberty, or are we not, to walk with our christian brethren, *as far as we are agreed,* or must we renounce their fellowship on account of error allowed not to be fundamental, although nothing is proposed to be done, or omitted, in such acts of communion, which would not equally be done, or omitted, on the supposition of their absence. Such is the precise state

of the question which it is my intention to discuss in these pages; and it may possibly contribute to its elucidation to observe, that the true idea of christian communion is by no means confined to a joint participation of the Lord's supper. He who, in the words of the apostles' creed, expresses his belief in the *communion of saints*, adverts to much more than is comprehended in one particular act. In an intelligent assent to that article, is comprehended the total of that sympathy and affection, with all its natural expressions and effects, by which the followers of Christ are united, in consequence of their union with their Head, and their joint share in the common salvation. The kiss of charity in the apostolic age, the right hand of fellowship, a share in the oblations of the church, a commendatory epistle attesting the exemplary character of the bearer, uniting in social prayer, the employment of the term brother or sister to denote spiritual consanguinity, were all considered in the purest ages as tokens of *communion;* a term which is never applied in the New Testament exclusively to the Lord's supper. When it is used in connexion with that rite, it is employed not to denote the fellowship of christians, but the spiritual participation of the body and blood of Christ.*

When we engage a christian brother to present supplications to God in our behalf, it cannot be doubted that we have fellowship with him, not less real or spiritual than at the Lord's table. From

* 1 Cor. x. 16.

these considerations it is natural to infer, that no scruple ought to be entertained respecting the lawfulness of uniting to commemorate our Saviour's death, with those with whom we feel ourselves at liberty to join in every other branch of religious worship. Where no attempt is made to obscure its import, or impair its simplicity, by the introduction of human ceremonies, but it is proposed to be celebrated in the manner which we apprehend to be perfectly consonant to the mind of Christ, it would seem less reasonable to refuse to cooperate in this branch of religion than in any other, because it is appointed to be a memorial of the greatest instance of love that was ever exhibited, as well as the principal pledge of christian fraternity. It must appear surprising that the rite, which, of all others, is most adapted to cement mutual attachment, and which is in a great measure appointed for that purpose, should be fixed upon as the line of demarcation, the impassable barrier, to separate and disjoin the followers of Christ. He who admits his fellow-christian to share in every other spiritual privilege, while he prohibits his approach to the Lord's table, entertains a view of that institution diametrically opposite to what has usually prevailed; he must consider it, not so much in the light of a commemoration of his Saviour's death and passion, as a religious test, designed to ascertain and establish an agreement in points not fundamental. According to this notion of it, it is no longer a symbol of our common christianity, it

is the badge and criterion of a party, a mark of discrimination applied to distinguish the nicer shades of difference among christians. How far either scripture or reason can be adduced in support of such a view of the subject, it will be the business of the following pages to inquire.

In the mean while, it will be necessary, in order to render the argument perfectly intelligible, to premise a few words respecting the particular controversy on which the ensuing observations are meant especially to bear. Few of my readers probably require to be informed, that there is a class of christians pretty widely diffused through these realms, who deny the validity of infant baptism, considering it as a human invention, not countenanced by the Scriptures, nor by the practice of the first and purest ages. Besides their denial of the right of infants to baptism, they also contend for the exclusive validity of immersion in that ordinance, in distinction from the sprinkling or pouring of water. In support of the former, they allege the total silence of scripture respecting the baptism of infants, together with their incompetence to comprehend the truths, or sustain the engagements, which they conceive it designed to exhibit. For the latter, they urge the well-known import of the original word employed to express the baptismal rite, which they allege cannot, without the most unnatural violence, be understood to command any thing less than an *immersion* of the whole body. The class of

christians whose sentiments I am relating, are usually known by the appellation of *baptists;* in contradistinction from whom, all other christians may properly be denominated *pædobaptists.* It is not my intention to enter into a defence of their peculiar tenets, though they have my unqualified approbation; but merely to state them for the information of my readers. It must be obvious that in the judgement of the baptists, such as have only received the baptismal rite in their infancy must be deemed in reality *unbaptized;* for this is only a different mode of expressing their conviction of the invalidity of infant sprinkling. On this ground they have for the most part confined their communion to persons of their own persuasion, in which, illiberal as it may appear, they are supported by the general practice of the christian world, which, whatever diversities of opinion may have prevailed, has generally concurred in insisting upon baptism as an indispensable prerequisite to the Lord's table. The effect which has resulted in this particular case has indeed been singular, but it has arisen from a rigid adherence to a principle, almost universally adopted, that baptism is, under all circumstances, a necessary prerequisite to the Lord's supper. The practice we are now specifying has usually been termed *strict communion,* while the opposite practice of admitting sincere christians to the eucharist, though in our judgement not baptized, is styled *free communion.* Strict communion is the general practice of our churches, though

the abettors of the opposite opinion are rapidly increasing both in numbers and in respectability. The humble hope of casting some additional light on a subject which appears to me of no trivial importance, is my only motive for composing this treatise, in which it will be necessary to attempt the establishment of principles sufficiently comprehensive to decide other questions in ecclesiastical polity, besides those which concern the present controversy. I am greatly mistaken if it be possible to bring it to a satisfactory issue, without adverting to topics in which the christian world are not less interested than the baptists. If the conclusions we shall endeavour to establish, appear on impartial inquiry to be well founded, it will follow that serious errors respecting terms of communion have prevailed to a wide extent in the christian church. It will be my anxious endeavour, in the progress of this discussion, to avoid whatever is calculated to irritate; and instead of acting the part of a pleader, to advance no argument which has not been well weighed, and of whose validity I am not perfectly convinced. The inquiry will be pursued under two parts; in the first, I shall consider the arguments in favour of *strict communion;* in the second, state, with all possible brevity, the evidence by which we attempt to sustain the opposite practice.

# PART I.

## ARGUMENTS FOR STRICT COMMUNION CONSIDERED.

In reviewing the arguments which are usually urged for the practice of *strict communion,* or the exclusion of unbaptized persons from the Lord's table, I shall chiefly confine myself to the examination of such as are adduced by the venerable Mr. Booth, in his treatise styled "An Apology for the Baptists," because he is not only held in the highest esteem by the whole denomination, but is allowed by his partisans to have exhibited the full force of their cause. He writes on the subject under discussion with all his constitutional ardour and confidence; which, supported by the spotless integrity and elevated sanctity of the man, have contributed, more perhaps than any other cause, to fortify the baptists in their prevailing practice. I trust the free strictures which it will be necessary to make on his performance, will not be deemed inconsistent with a sincere veneration for his character, which I should be sorry to see treated with the unsparing ridicule and banter with which he has assailed Mr.

Bunyan, a name equally dear to genius and to piety. The reader will not expect me to follow him in his declamatory excursions, or in those miscellaneous quotations, often irrelevant, which the extent of his reading has supplied: it will suffice if I carefully examine his arguments, without omitting a single consideration on which he could be supposed to lay a stress.

## Section I.

### *The Argument from the Order of Time in which Baptism and the Lord's Supper are supposed to have been instituted.*

One of the principal pleas in favour of *strict communion* is derived from the supposed *priority* of the institution of baptism to the Lord's supper. "That baptism was an ordinance of God," say our opponents, "that submission to it was required, that it was administered to multitudes before the sacred supper was heard of, are undeniable facts. There never was a time since the ministry of our Lord's successors, in which it was not the duty of repenting and believing sinners to be baptized. The venerable John, the twelve apostles, and the *Son of God* incarnate, all united in commanding baptism, at a time when it would have been impious to have eaten bread, and drank wine, as an ordinance of divine worship. Baptism,

therefore, had the *priority* in point of institution, which is a presumptive evidence that it has, and ever will have, a prior claim to our obedience. So under the ancient economy, *sacrifices* and *circumcision* were appointed and practised in the patriarchal ages: in the time of Moses, the *paschal feast,* and *burning incense* in the holy place, were appointed by the God of Israel. But the two former being prior in point of institution, always had the priority in point of administration."*

As this is a leading argument, and will go far towards determining the point at issue, the reader will excuse the examination of it being extended to some length. It proceeds, obviously, entirely on a matter of fact, which it assumes as undeniable, the *priority* in *point of time* of the institution of christian baptism, to that of the Lord's supper; and this again rests on another assumption, which is, the identity of John's baptism with that of our Lord. If it should clearly appear that these were two distinct institutes, the argument will be reversed, and it will be evident that the eucharist was appointed and celebrated before christian baptism existed. Let me request the reader not to be startled at the paradoxical air of this assertion, but to lend an impartial attention to the following reasons:

1. The commission to baptize all nations, which was executed by the apostles after our Saviour's

* Booth's Apology, page 41.

resurrection, originated in his *express command;* John's baptism, it is evident, had no such origin. John had baptized for some time before he knew him; it is certain, then, that he did not receive his commission from him. "And I knew him not," saith he, "but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water." If the manifesting Christ to Israel was the end and design of John's mission, he must have been in a previous state of obscurity; not in a situation to act the part of a legislator by enacting laws or establishing rites. John uniformly ascribes his commission, not to Christ, but the Father, so that to assert his baptism to be a *christian* institute, is not to interpret, but to contradict him. "And I knew him not," is his language, "but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bear record, that this is the Son of God." It was not till he had accredited his mission, by many miracles, and other demonstrations of a preternatural power and wisdom, that our Lord proceeded to modify religion by new institutions, of which the eucharist is the first example. But a christian ordinance not founded on the authority of Christ, not the effect, but the means of his manifestation, and which was first executed by one who knew him not, is to me an incomprehensible mystery.

2. The baptism of John was the baptism of *repentance,* or reformation, as a preparation for the approaching kingdom of God: the institute of Christ included an explicit profession of faith in a particular person, as the Lord of that kingdom. The ministry of John was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." All he demanded of such as repaired to him, was to declare their conviction that the Messiah was shortly to appear, to repent of their sins, and resolve to frame their lives in a manner agreeable to such an expectation, without requiring a belief in any existing individual as the Messiah. They were merely to express their readiness to *believe on him who was to come,** on the reasonable supposition that his actual appearance would not fail to be accompanied with attestations sufficient to establish his pretensions. The profession required in a candidate for *christian* baptism, involved an *historical* faith, a belief in a certain individual, an illustrious personage, who had wrought miracles, declared himself the Son of God, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and rose again the third day. As the conviction demanded in the two cases was *totally distinct,* it was possible for him who sincerely avowed the one, to be destitute of the other; and though the rejection of Christ by John's converts would have been criminal and destructive of salvation, it would not have been

* Acts xix. 4.

self-contradictory, or absurd, since he might sincerely believe on his testimony, that the Christ was shortly to appear, and make some preparations for his approach, who was not satisfied with his character when he was actually manifested.

That such was the real situation of the great body of the Jewish people, at our Lord's advent, is evident from the evangelical records. In short, the profession demanded in the baptism of John was nothing more than a solemn recognition of that great article of the Jewish faith, the appearance of the Messiah, accompanied, indeed, with this additional circumstance, that it was nigh at hand. The faith required by the apostles included a persuasion of all the miraculous facts which they attested, comprehending the preternatural conception, the deity, incarnation and atonement, the miracles, the death, and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. In the one, was contained a general expectation of the speedy appearance of an illustrious person under the character of the Messiah; in the other, an explicit declaration that Jesus of Nazareth, whose life and death are recorded in the evangelists, was the identical person. But in order to constitute an identity in religious rites, two things are requisite, a *sameness* in the corporeal action, and a sameness in the import. The *action* may be the same, yet the rites totally different, or christian baptism must be confounded with legal Jewish purifications, the greater part of which consisted in a total immersion of the

body in water. The diversity of signification, the distinct uses to which they were applied, constitute their only difference, but quite sufficient to render it absurd to consider them as one and the same. And surely he is guilty of a similar mistake, who, misled by the exact resemblance of the actions physically considered, confounds the rite intended to announce the future, though speedy appearance of the Messiah, without defining his person, and the ceremony expressive of a firm belief in an identical person, as already manifested under that illustrious character.

3. Christian baptism was invariably administered in the *name of Jesus;* while there is sufficient evidence that John's was not performed in that name. That it was not during the first stage of his ministry is certain, because we learn from his own declaration, that when he first executed his commission he did not know him, but was previously apprised of a miraculous sign, which should serve to identify him when he appeared. In order to obviate the suspicion of collusion or conspiracy, circumstances were so arranged that John remained ignorant of the person of the Saviour, and possessed, at the commencement of his career, that knowledge only of the Messiah which was common to enlightened Jews. If we suppose him at a subsequent period to have incorporated the name of Jesus with his institute, an alteration so striking would unquestionably have been noticed by the evangelists, as it must have occasioned among the

people much speculation and surprise, of which, however, no traces are perceptible. Besides, it is impossible to peruse the gospels with attention, without remarking the extreme reserve maintained by our Lord, with respect to his claim to the character of Messiah; that he studiously avoided, until his arraignment before the high priest, the public declaration of that fact; that he wrought his principal miracles in the obscure province of Galilee, often accompanied with strict injunctions of secrecy; and that the whole course of his ministry, till its concluding scene, was so conducted as at once to afford sincere inquirers sufficient evidence of his mission, and to elude the malice of his enemies. In descending from the mount of transfiguration, where he had been proclaimed the Son of God from *the most excellent glory,* he strictly charged the disciples who accompanied him to tell no man of it, till he was raised from the dead. The appellation he constantly assumed was that of the Son of Man, which, whatever be its precise import, could by no construction become the ground of a criminal charge. When at the feast of dedication, "the Jews came around him in the temple, saying, How long dost thou keep us in suspense? if thou be the Christ, tell us plainly:" he replied, "I have told you, and ye believe not: the works which I do in my Father's name they bear witness of me."* From this passage it is evident that our Lord had not, hitherto, publicly and explicitly

* John x. 24, 25.

affirmed himself to be the Messiah, or there would have been no foundation for the complaint of these Jews; nor does he on this occasion expressly affirm it, but refers them to the testimony of his works, without specifying the precise import of that attestation. In the progress of his discourse, however, he advances nearer to an open declaration of his Messiahship than on any former occasion, affirming his Father and himself to be one, in consequence of which the people attempt to stone him, as guilty of blasphemy, in making himself the Son of God. As his time was not yet come, he still maintains a degree of his wonted caution, and vindicates his assumption of that honour, upon principles far inferior to what he might justly have urged. Yet such was the effect of this discourse, that in order to screen himself from the fury of his enemies, he found it necessary immediately to retire beyond Jordan. In an advanced stage of his ministry, we find him inquiring of his disciples the prevailing opinions entertained respecting himself; on which they reply, "Some say thou art John the Baptist, others Elias, others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." That he was the Messiah, was not, it is evident, the opinion generally entertained at that time, by such as were most favourably disposed towards his character and pretensions, which it could not fail to have been, had this title been publicly proclaimed: but this was so far from his intention, that when Peter, in the name of the rest of the apostles, uttered that

glorious confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," our Lord immediately enjoins secrecy. What he enjoined his disciples not to publish, he certainly did not publish himself, nor for the same reason suffer it to be indiscriminately proclaimed by his forerunner. But if we suppose John to baptize in his name, we must suppose what is equivalent to an explicit declaration of his being the Messiah; for since he on all occasions predicted the speedy appearance of that great personage, the people could not fail to identify with him, the individual whose name was thus employed, and all the precautions maintained by our Saviour would have been utterly defeated. For what possible purpose could he forbid his disciples to publish, what John is supposed to have promulgated as often as he administered the baptismal rite? and how shall we account, on this hypothesis, for the diversity of opinion which prevailed respecting his character, among those who were thoroughly convinced of the divine mission of that great Prophet? From these considerations, in addition to the total silence of scripture, the judicious reader, I presume, will conclude without hesitation that John did *not* baptize in the name of Jesus, which is an essential ingredient in christian baptism; and though it is administered, in fact, in the name of each person of the blessed Godhead, not in that of the Son only, this, instead of impairing, strengthens the argument, by enlarging still farther the difference betwixt the two ordinances in

question; for none will contend that John immersed his disciples in the name of the Holy Trinity.

4. The baptism instituted by our Lord, is in scripture distinguished from that of the forerunner, by the *superior effects* with which it was accompanied; so that, instead of being confounded, they are contrasted, in the sacred historians. "I indeed," said John, "baptize you with water unto repentance, but there cometh one after me who is mightier than I; he shall baptize you in the Holy Ghost, and in fire." The rite administered by John was a mere immersion in water, unaccompanied with that effusion of the Spirit, that redundant supply of supernatural gifts and graces which distinguished the subjects of the christian institute. On the passage just quoted, St. Chrysostom has the following comment:—"Having agitated their minds with the fear of future judgement, and the expectation of punishment, and the mention of the axe, and the rejection of their ancestors, and the substitution of a new race, together with the double menace of excision and burning, and by all these means softened their obduracy, and disposed them to a desire of deliverance from these evils, he then introduces the mention of Christ, not in a simple manner, but with much elevation; in exhibiting his own disparity, lest he should appear to be using the language of compliment, he commences by stating a comparison betwixt the benefit bestowed by each. For he did not immediately say, I am not worthy

to unloose the latchet of his shoes; but having first stated the *insignificance* of his own baptism, and shewn that it had no effect beyond bringing them to repentance, (for he did not style it the water of remission, but of repentance,) he proceeds to the baptism ordained by Christ, which was replete with an *ineffable gift.*"* This eminent father, we perceive, insists on the prodigious inferiority of the ceremony performed by John to the christian sacrament, from its being merely a symbol of repentance, without comprehending the remission of sins,† or the donation of the Spirit. The evangelists, Mark and Luke, it is true, affirm that John preached the baptism of repentance *for* the remission of sins, whence we are entitled to infer that the rite which he administered, when accompanied with suitable dispositions, was important in the order of preparation, not that it was accompanied with the immediate or actual collation of that benefit.

Such as repented at his call, stood fair candidates for the blessings of the approaching dispensation, among which, an assurance of pardon, the adoption of children, and the gift of the Spirit, held the most conspicuous place; blessings of which it was the office of John to excite the expectation, but of Christ to bestow. The effusion of the Spirit, indeed, in the multifarious forms of his miraculous and sanctifying operation, may be considered as

* Homily xi. on Matthew.

† Mark i. 4. Luke iii. 3.

equivalent to them all; and this, we are distinctly told, was not given (save in a very scanty manner) during our Lord's abode upon earth, because he was not yet glorified. Reserved to adorn the triumph of the ascended Saviour, the apostles were commanded to wait at Jerusalem until it was bestowed, which was on the day of Pentecost, when "a sound from heaven as of a mighty wind, filled the place where they were assembled, and cloven tongues of fire sat upon each of them, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost." This was the first example of that baptism of the Spirit, as the author of which, John asserts the immense superiority of the Messiah, not to himself only, but to all preceding prophets. In the subsequent history, we perceive that this gift was, on all ordinary occasions, conferred in connexion with baptism. In this connexion, it is exhibited by St. Peter, in his address on the day of Pentecost; "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Thus it was also in the case of Saul of Tarsus. Agreeable to our Lord's prediction of the signs which should accompany them that believe, there is reason to suppose a greater or less measure of these supernatural endowments regularly accompanied the imposition of the hands of the apostles on primitive converts, immediately subsequent to their baptism; which affords an easy solution to the surprise Paul appears to have felt, in finding

certain disciples at Ephesus, who, though they had been baptized, were yet unacquainted with these communications. "Into what then," he asks, "were ye baptized?" and upon being informed "into John's baptism," the difficulty vanished.

Since the baptism of the Holy Ghost, or the copious effusion of spiritual influences, in which primitive christians were, so to speak, immersed, was appointed to follow the sacramental use of water, under the christian economy, while the same corporeal action performed by John was a naked ceremony, not accompanied by any such effects, this difference betwixt them is sufficient to account for their being *contrasted* in scripture, and ought ever to have prevented their being confounded as one and the same institute.

5. The case of the disciples at Ephesus, to which we have just adverted, affords a demonstrative proof of the position for which we are contending; for if John's baptism was the same with our Lord's, upon what principles could St. Paul proceed in administering the latter to such as had already received the former? As I am aware that some have attempted to deny so plain a fact, I shall beg leave to quote the whole passage, which, I am persuaded, will leave no doubt on the mind of an impartial reader:—"It came to pass while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul, passing through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? but they replied,

"We have not even heard that there is an Holy Ghost. He said unto them, Into what then were ye baptized? they said, Into John's baptism. Paul replied, John indeed baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him who was to come, that is, on Jesus Christ. And when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of *the Lord Jesus: and* when Paul had *laid his hands upon them, the* Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied." I am conscious that there are not wanting some who contend that the fifth verse* is to be interpreted as the language of St. Paul, affirming that at the command of John, the people were baptized in the name of Jesus. But, not to repeat what has already been advanced to shew that this is contrary to fact, (for who, I might ask, were the people, who at his instigation were baptized in that name, or what traces are there in the evangelical history of such a practice, during the period of his ministry?) not to insist further on this, it is obvious that this interpretation of the passage contradicts itself: for if John told the people that they were to believe on him who *was* to come, this was equivalent to declaring that he had not yet manifested himself; while the baptizing in his name as an existing individual, would have been to affirm the contrary. Besides, we must remark, that the persons on whom Paul is asserted

* "When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." Acts xix. 5.

to have laid his hands, were unquestionably the identical persons who are affirmed in the preceding verse to have been baptized; for there is no other antecedent: so that if the meaning of the passage be what some contend for, the sacred historian must be supposed to assert that he laid his hands, not on the twelve disciples at Ephesus, but *on John's converts in general, that the Holy Ghost* came upon them, and that they spake with tongues and prophesied; which is ineffably absurd.

Either this must be supposed, or the words, which in their original structure are most closely combined, must be conceived to consist of two parts, the first relating to John's converts in general, the second to the twelve disciples at Ephesus; and the relative pronoun, expressive of the latter description of persons, instead of being conjoined to the preceding clause, must be referred to an antecedent, removed at the distance of three verses. In the whole compass of theological controversy, it would be difficult to assign a stronger instance of the force of prejudice in obscuring a plain matter of fact; nor is it easy to conjecture what could be the temptation to do such violence to the language of scripture, and to every principle of sober criticism, unless it were the horror which certain divines have conceived, against every thing which bore the shadow of countenancing anabaptistical error. The ancient commentators appear to have felt no such apprehensions, but to have followed,

without scruple, the natural import of the passage.*

* The intelligent reader will not be displeased to see the opinion of St. Austin on this point. It is almost unnecessary to say that it is decisively in our favour; nor does it appear that any of the fathers entertained a doubt on the subject. In consulting the opinion of those who contended that such as were reclaimed from heresy ought to be rebaptized, he represents them as arguing, that if the converts of John required to be rebaptized, much more those who were converted from heresy. Since they who had the baptism of John were commanded by Paul to be baptized, not having the baptism of Christ, why do you extol the merit of John, and reprobate the misery of heretics? "I concede to you," says St. Austin, "the misery of heretics: but heretics give the baptism of Christ, which John did not give."

The comment of Chrysostom, on the passage under consideration, is equally decisive. "He (Paul) did not say to them that the baptism of John was nothing, but that it was incomplete; nor does he say this simply, or without having a further purpose in view, but that he might teach and persuade them to be baptized in the name of Jesus, which they were, and received the Holy Ghost, by the laying on of Paul's hands." In the course of his exposition, he solves the difficulty attending the supposition of disciples at Ephesus, a place so remote from Judæa, having received baptism from John. "Perhaps," says he, "they were then on a journey, and went out, and were baptized." But even when they were baptized, they knew not Jesus. Nor does he ask them, Do ye believe on Jesus? but, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost?" He knew that they had not received it, but is desirous of speaking to them, that on learning that they were destitute of it, they might be induced to seek it. A little afterwards he adds, "Well did he (Paul) denominate the baptism of John, the baptism of repentance, and not of remission; instructing and persuading them that it was destitute of that advantage: but the effect of that which was given afterwards, was remission." *Homily in loco*, vol. iv. Etonæ. I am aware that very learned men have doubted the authenticity of Chrysostom's Commentary on the Acts, on account of the supposed inferiority of it to his other expository works. But without having recourse to so violent a supposition,

6. Independently of this decisive fact, whoever considers the extreme popularity of John, and the multitude, of all descriptions, who flocked to his baptism, will find it difficult to believe, that there were not many in the same situation with these twelve disciples. The annunciation of the speedy appearance of their Messiah was the most welcome of all intelligence to the Jewish people, and did not fail, for a time, to produce prodigious effects.

The reader is requested to notice the terms employed to describe the effects of John's ministry, and compare them with the language of the historian, in depicting the most prosperous state of the church. "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the coast round about Jordan, and were baptized in Jordan, confessing their sins." Where is such language employed to represent the success of the apostles? *Their* converts are *numerically* stated, and, at some distance from our Lord's ascension, appear to have amounted to about five thousand, while a great majority of the nation continued impenitent and incredulous. We read of no party formed against the son of Zechariah, no persecution raised against his followers; and such was the reverence in which he continued to be held after his death, that the

its inferiority, should it be admitted, may be easily accounted for by the negligence, ignorance, or inattention of his amanuensis; supposing (which is not improbable) that his discourses were taken from his lips. From the time he was sixty years of age, he permitted his discourses to be taken down in short-hand, just as he delivered them.—*Euseb.* lib. vi. c. 26.

scribes and pharisees, those determined enemies to the gospel, dared not avow their disbelief of his mission, because all the people considered him as a prophet. The historian Josephus, who is generally supposed by the learned to have made no mention of our Saviour, bears decisive testimony to John's merits, and imputes the misfortunes of Herod to the guilt he contracted by putting him to death.*

From these considerations, I infer, that if we suppose the converts made by the apostles to have been universally baptized, on their admission into the church, (a fact not doubted by our opponents,) multitudes of them must have been in the same situation with the disciples at Ephesus. How is it possible it should have been otherwise? When the number of his converts was so prodigious, when the submission to his institute appears to have been almost national, when of so small a number as twelve, two at least of the apostles were of his disciples, who can doubt, for a moment, that some, at least, of the multitudes who were converted on or after the day of Pentecost, consisted of such as had previously submitted to the baptism of John? Is it possible that the ministry of the forerunner, and of the apostles of our Lord, should both have been productive of such great effects among the same people, at the distance of a few years, without operating, in a single instance, in the same direction, and upon the same persons?

* Antiq. Jud. lib. viii. Colon. 1691.

Amongst the converts at the day of Pentecost, and at subsequent periods, there must have been no inconsiderable number who had for a time been sufficiently awakened by the ministry of John to comply with this ordinance; yet it is evident, from the narrative in the Acts, as well as admitted by our opponents, that Peter enjoined on them all, without exception, the duty of being immersed in the name of Christ. That such a description of persons should need to be converted by the apostles, will easily be conceived, if we allow ourselves to reflect on the circumstances of the times. "He was a burning and a shining light," said our Lord, speaking of his forerunner, "and ye were willing for a time to rejoice in his light." This implies that their attachment was transient, their repentance superficial, and that the greater part of such as appeared, for a while, most determined to press into the kingdom of God, afterwards sunk into a state of apathy. The singular spectacle of a prophet arising, after a long cessation of prophetical gifts, his severe sanctity, his bold and alarming address, coinciding with the general expectation of the Messiah, made a powerful impression on the spirits of men, and disposed them to pay a profound attention to his ministry; and from their attachment to every thing ritual and ceremonial, they would feel no hesitation in submitting to the ceremony enjoined. But when the kingdom, which they eagerly anticipated, appeared to be altogether of a spiritual nature,

divested of secular pomp and grandeur; when the sublimer mysteries of the gospel began to be unfolded, and the necessity inculcated of eating the flesh, and drinking the blood, of the Son of Man, the people were offended; and even of the professed disciples of our Lord, "many walked no more with him." A general declension succeeded, so that, of the multitudes who once appeared to be much moved by his ministry, and that of his forerunner, the number which persevered was so inconsiderable, that all that could be mustered to witness his resurrection amounted to little more than five hundred,* a number which may be considered as constituting the whole body of the church, till the day of Pentecost.

The parable of the house forsaken for a time by an evil spirit, swept and garnished, to which he returned with seven more wicked than himself, it is generally admitted was designed to represent this temporary reformation of the Jewish nation, together with its subsequent apostasy. The day of Pentecost changed the scene, the power of the ascended Saviour began to be developed; and three thousand were converted at one time. Nor did it cease here; for soon after, we are informed of a great multitude of priests who became obedient to the faith; and at a subsequent period, St. James reminds the apostle of the gentiles of many myriads of converted Jews, all zealous for the law.

* 1 Cor. xv. 6.

Let me ask again, is it possible to suppose that none of these myriads consisted of such as had been baptized by John? Were they all, without exception, of that impious class which uniformly held his mission in contempt? It is impossible to suppose it; it is contradicted by the express testimony of scripture, which affirms two of the apostles to have been his disciples and companions.* But if such as professed their faith in Christ, under the ministry of the apostles, were baptized on that profession, without any consideration of their having been previously immersed by John, or not, what stronger proof can be desired, that the institutes in question were totally distinct? Were we satisfied with an *argumentum ad hominem*, with the sort of proof sufficient to silence our opponents, here the matter might safely rest. But, independent of their concession, I must add that it is manifest from the whole tenour of the Acts, that the baptismal rite was universally administered to the converts to christianity subsequent to the day of Pentecost. "Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized *every one* of you:" it is added, almost immediately, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized."

It will possibly be asked, if the rite which the forerunner of our Lord administered is not to be considered as a christian institute, to what dispensation are we to assign it, since it is, manifestly, no part of the economy of Moses. We reply, that it

* John i. 35—37.

was the symbol of a peculiar dispensation, which was neither entirely legal nor evangelical, but occupied an intermediate station, possessing something of the character and attributes of both; a kind of twilight, equally removed from the obscurity of the first, and the splendour of the last and perfect economy of religion. *The law and the prophets were until John;* his mission constituted a distinct æra, and placed the nation, to which he was sent, in circumstances materially different from its preceding or subsequent state. It was the æra of preparation; it was a voice which, breaking through a long silence, announced the immediate approach of the *desire of all nations, the messenger of the covenant, in whom they delighted.* In announcing this event as at hand, and establishing a rite unknown to the law, expressive of that purity of heart, and reformation of life, which were the only suitable preparations for his reception, he stood alone, equally severed from the choir of the prophets, and the company of the apostles: and the light which he emitted, though it greatly surpassed every preceding illumination, was of short duration, being soon eclipsed and extinguished by that ineffable effulgence, before which nothing can retain its splendour.

The wisdom of God in the arrangement of successive dispensations, seems averse to sudden and violent innovations, rarely introducing new rites, without incorporating something of the old. As by the introduction of the Mosaic, the simple ritual

of the patriarchal dispensation was not so properly abolished, as amplified and extended into a regular system of prefigurations of *good things to come,* in which the worship by sacrifices, and the distinction of animals into clean and unclean, reappeared under a new form; so the æra of immediate preparation was distinguished by a ceremony not entirely new, but derived from the purifications of the law, applied to a special purpose.* Our Lord incorporated the same rite into his religion, newly modified, and adapted to the peculiar views and objects of the christian economy, in conjunction with another positive institution, the rudiments of which are perceptible in the passover. It seemed suitable to his wisdom, by such gentle gradations to conduct his church from an infantine state, to a state of maturity and perfection.

Before I dismiss this part of the subject, which has perhaps already detained the reader too long, I must beg leave to hazard one conjecture. Since it is manifest that the baptism of John did not supersede the christian ordinance, they being perfectly distinct, it is natural to inquire who baptized the apostles, and the hundred and twenty disciples assembled with them at the day of Pentecost. My deliberate opinion is, that, in the christian sense of the term, they were not baptized at all. From the total silence of scripture, and from other circumstances which might be adduced, it is difficult to

* The principal part of these consisted in bathing the body in water.

suppose they submitted to that rite after our Saviour's resurrection; and previous to it, it has been sufficiently proved that it was not in force. It is almost certain that some, probably most of them, had been baptized by John, but, for reasons which have been already amply assigned, this will not account for their not submitting to the christian ordinance. The true account seems to be, that the precept of baptism had no *retrospective* bearing; and that, consequently, its obligation extended only to such as were converted to christianity subsequently to the time of its promulgation. Such as had professed their faith in Christ from the period of his first manifestation, could not, without palpable incongruity, recommence that profession, which would have been to cancel and annul their former religious pretensions. With what propriety could the apostles of the Lord, *who had continued with him in his temptations*, place themselves on a level with that multitude, which, however penitent at present, had recently demanded his blood with clamorous importunity? not to insist that they had already received the baptism of the Holy Ghost, of which the sacramental use of water was but a figure. They were not converted to the christian religion subsequently to their Lord's resurrection, nor did the avowal of their attachment to the Messiah commence from that period; and therefore they were not comprehended under the baptismal law, which was propounded for the regulation of the

conduct of persons in essentially different circumstances. When St. Paul says, "*As many* of us as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ," his language seems to intimate that there were a class of christians to whom this argument did not apply.*

Having proved, I trust to the satisfaction of the candid reader, that baptism, considered as a christian institution, had no existence during the personal ministry of our Saviour, the plea of our opponents, founded on the supposed *priority* of that ordinance to the Lord's supper, is completely overruled; whatever weight it might possess, supposing it were valid, must be wholly transferred to the opposite side, and it must be acknowledged, either that they have reasoned inconclusively, or have produced a demonstration in our favour. It now appears that the original communicants at the Lord's table, at the time they partook of it, were, with respect to christian baptism, precisely in the same situation with the persons they exclude.

## Section II.

### *The Argument for Strict Communion, from the Order of Words in the Apostolic Commission, considered.*

The commission which the apostles received after our Lord's resurrection, was in the following

* Rom. vi. 3.

words :—"All power is given to me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you." From baptism being mentioned *first* after teaching, it is urged that it ought invariably to be administered immediately after effectual instruction is imparted, and consequently before an approach to the Lord's table. Whence it is concluded that to communicate with such as are unbaptized, is a violation of divine order.*

* "Teach," says Mr. Booth, "is the high commission, and such the express command of him who is *Lord of all*, when addressing those who are called to preach his word, and administer his institutions. Hence it is manifest the commission and command are first of all to teach: what then?—to baptize, or to administer the Lord's supper? I leave common sense to judge, and being persuaded that she will give her verdict in my favour, I will venture to add, a limited commission implies a prohibition of such things as are not contained in it; and positive laws imply their *negative*.

"For instance, when God commanded Abraham to circumcise all his males, he readily concluded that neither circumcision, nor any rite of a similar nature, was to be administered to his females. And as our brethren themselves maintain, when Christ commanded *believers* should be baptized, without mentioning any others, he tacitly prohibited that ordinance from being administered to *infants*; so, by parity of reason, if the same sovereign Lord commanded that believers should be baptized—baptized *immediately* after they made a profession of faith, then he must intend that the administration of baptism should be prior to a reception of the Lord's supper, and, consequently, tacitly prohibits every unbaptized person having communion at his table."—*Booth's Apology*, p. 34.

It may assist the reader to form a judgement of the force of the argument adduced on this occasion, if we reduce it to the following syllogism:

The persons who are to be taught to observe all things given in charge to the apostle, are the baptized alone.

But the Lord's supper is one of these things.

Therefore the ordinance of the Lord's supper ought to be enjoined on the baptized alone.

Here it is obvious that the conclusion rests entirely upon this principle, that *nothing* which the apostles were commissioned to enjoin on believers, is to be recommended to the attention of persons not baptized; since, as far as this argument is concerned, the observation of the Lord's supper is supposed not to belong to them, merely because it forms a part of those precepts. It is obvious, if the reasoning of our opponents be valid, it militates irresistibly against the inculcation of every branch of christian duty, on persons who in their judgement have not partaken of the baptismal sacrament: it excludes them not merely from the Lord's supper, but from every species of instruction appropriate to christians; nor can they exhort pædobaptists to walk worthy of their high calling, to adorn their christian profession, to cultivate brotherly love, or to the performance of any duty resulting from their actual relation to Christ, without a palpable violation of their own principles. In all such instances they would be teaching them to observe injunctions which Christ gave in charge

to the apostles for the regulation of christian conduct, while they deem it necessary to repel them from the sacrament, merely on account of its forming a part of those injunctions. Nor can they avoid the force of this reasoning, by objecting that though it may be their duty to enjoin on unbaptized believers some parts of the mind of Christ respecting the conduct of his mystical members, it will not follow that they are to be admitted to the Lord's table; and that their meaning is, that it is only subsequently to baptism, that *all things* ought to be enforced on the consciences of christians. For if it be once admitted that the clause on which so much stress is laid, is not to be interpreted so as absolutely to exclude unbaptized christians from the *whole* of its import, to what purpose is it alleged against their admission to the eucharist? or how does it appear that this may not be one of the parts in which they are comprehended?

When the advocates for strict communion remind us of the order in which the two positive institutions of christianity are enjoined, they appear to assume it for granted that we are desirous of inverting that order, and that we are contending for the celebration of the eucharist previous to baptism, in the case of a clear comprehension of the nature and obligation of each. We plead for nothing of the kind. Supposing a convert to christianity convinced of the ordinance of baptism, in the light in which we contemplate it, we should

urge his obligation to comply with it, previous to his reception of the sacrament, with as little hesitation as the most rigid of our opponents; nor should we be more disposed than themselves to countenance a neglect of known duty, or a wanton inversion of the order of christian appointments. Whether in such circumstances the attention of a candidate for christian communion should first be directed to baptism, is not the question at issue; but what conduct ought to be maintained towards sincere christians, who, after serious examination, profess their conviction of being baptized already, or who, in any manner whatever, are withheld by motives purely conscientious, from complying with what we conceive to be a christian ordinance. To justify the exclusion of such from the Lord's table, it is not sufficient to allege the prescribed order of the institutions; it is necessary also to evince such a *dependence* of one upon the other, that a neglect of the first from involuntary mistake, annuls the obligation of the second. Let this dependence be once clearly pointed out, and we give up the cause. It has been asserted, indeed, with much confidence, that we have the same authority for confining our communion to baptized persons, as the ancient Jews for admitting none but such as had been circumcised, to the passover: a simple recital, however, of the words of the law, with respect to that ancient rite, will be sufficient to demonstrate the contrary: "When a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep his passover to the Lord, let

all his males be circumcised, and then let him come and keep it, and he shall be as one that is born in the land; for no *uncircumcised* person shall eat thereof." But where, let me ask, is it asserted in the New Testament that no unbaptized person shall partake of the eucharist?* So far from this, it has been, I trust, satisfactorily shewn, that, of the original communicants at its first institution, not one was thus qualified.

I presume it will be acknowledged that the Jewish law was so clear and express in insisting on circumcision as a necessary preparation for partaking of the paschal lamb, that none could mistake it, or approach that feast in an uncircumcised state, without being guilty of wilful impiety; and if it is intended to insinuate the same charge against pædobaptists, let it be alleged without disguise, that it may be fairly met and refuted. But if it be acknowledged that nothing but such involuntary mistakes, such unintentional errors as are incident to some of the wisest and best of men, are imputable in the present instance, we are at a loss to conceive upon what principle they are compared to wilful prevarication and rebellion.

* "Was it the duty, think you, of an ancient Israelite to worship at the sanctuary, or to partake of the paschal feast, before he was circumcised? Or was it the duty of the Jewish priests to burn incense in the holy place, before they offered the morning or evening service? The appointments of God must be administered in his own way, and in that order which he has fixed."—*Booth's Apology*, p. 143.

The degree of blame which attaches to the conduct of those who mistake the will of Christ with respect to the sacramental use of water, we shall not pretend to determine; but we feel no hesitation in affirming, that the practice of comparing it to a presumptuous violation and contempt of divine law, is equally repugnant to the dictates of propriety and of candour. Among the innumerable descendants of Abraham, it is impossible to find one, since their departure from Egypt, who has doubted of the obligation of circumcision, of the proper subjects of that rite, or of its being an indispensable prerequisite to the privileges of the Mosaic covenant. Among christians, on the contrary, of unexceptionable character and exalted piety, it cannot be denied that the subject, the mode, and the perpetuity of baptism, have each supplied occasion for controversy; which can only be ascribed to the minute particularity with which the ceremonies of the law were enjoined, compared to the concise brevity which characterises the history of evangelical institutes. We are far, however, from insinuating a doubt on the obligation of believers to submit to the ordinance of baptism, or of its being exclusively appropriated to such; but we affirm that in no part of scripture is it inculcated as a *preparative to the Lord's supper*, and that this view of it is a mere fiction of the imagination.

When duties are enjoined in a certain series, each of them, on the authority in which they originate,

become obligatory; nor are we excused from performing those which stand later in the series, on account of our having, from misconception of their meaning, or from any other cause, omitted the first. To exemplify this by a familiar instance: It will be admitted that the law of nature enforces the following duties, resulting from the relation of children to their parents: first, to yield implicit obedience in the state of nonage; next, in maturer age to pay respectful deference to their advice, and a prompt attention to their wants; lastly, after they are deceased, affectionately to cherish their memory, and defend their good name. None will deny that each of these branches of conduct is obligatory, and that this is the order in which they are recommended to our attention. But will it be contended that he who has neglected the first, ought not to perform the second; or that he who has failed in the second, ought to omit the third? To such an absurd pretence we should immediately reply that they are all *independently* obligatory, as respective dictates of the divine will; and that for him who has violated one of them, to urge his past delinquencies as an apology for the present, would only prove an aggravation of his guilt. It is true that some duties are so situated, as parts or appendages of preceding ones, that their obligation may be said to result from them; as, for example, the duty of confessing Christ before men arises from the previous duty of believing on him; and that of joining a christian society, presupposes the

obligation of becoming a christian. In such cases, however, as the connexion betwixt the respective branches of practice is founded on the nature of things, it is easily perceived, and rarely, if ever, the subject of controversy. In a series of positive precepts, this principle has no place; as they originate merely in arbitrary appointment, their mutual relation can only be the result of clear and express command; and as reason could never have discovered their obligation, so it is as little able to ascertain their intrinsic connexion and dependence, which, wherever it subsists, must be the effects of the same positive prescription which gave them birth. It cannot be pretended that an unbaptized believer is intrinsically disqualified for a suitable attendance at the Lord's table, or that it is so essentially connected with baptism, as to render the act of communion, in itself, absurd or improper. The communion has no retrospective reference to baptism, nor is baptism an anticipation of communion. Enjoined at different times, and appointed for different purposes, they are capable, without the least inconvenience, of being contemplated apart; and on no occasion are they mentioned in such a connexion as to imply, much less to assert, that the one is enjoined *with a view* to the other. Such a connexion, we acknowledge, subsisted betwixt the rites of circumcision and the passover; and all we demand of the advocates of strict communion is, that instead of amusing us with fanciful analogies drawn from an antiquated

law, they would point us to some clause in the New Testament which asserts a similar relation betwixt baptism and the Lord's supper. But here, where the very hinge of the controversy turns, the Scriptures are silent. They direct us to be baptized, and they direct us to commemorate the Saviour's death; but not a syllable do they utter to inform us of the inseparable connexion betwixt these two ordinances. This deficiency is ill supplied by fervid declamation on the perspicuity of our Lord's commission, and the inexcusable inattention or prejudice which has led to a misconception of its meaning; for let the persons whom these charges may concern be as guilty as they may, since they are still acknowledged to be christians, the questions return, why are they debarred from the communion of saints, and, while entitled to all other spiritual privileges, supposed to be incapacitated from partaking of the symbols of a crucified Saviour? How came the deteriorating effects of their error respecting baptism to affect them but in one point, that of their eligibility as candidates for communion, without spreading farther? That it just amounts to a forfeiture of this privilege, and of no other, is a conclusion to which, as it is certain it cannot be established by reason, we ask to be conducted by revelation; and we entreat our opponents for information on that head again and again, but entreat in vain.

Were we to judge from the ardent attachment which the abettors of strict communion, on all

occasions, profess to the positive institutes of the gospel, we should suppose that the object of their efforts was to raise them to their just estimation, and to rescue them from desuetude and neglect. We should conjecture that they arose from a solicitude to revive certain practices which had prevailed in the purest ages of the church, but were afterwards laid aside, just as the ordinance of preaching was, during the triumph of the papacy, almost consigned to oblivion; and that the consequence of complying with their suggestions, would be a more complete exhibition of christianity in all its parts. But their zeal operates in quite a contrary direction. The success of their scheme tends not to extend the practice of baptism, no, not in a single instance, but merely to exclude the Lord's supper. Leaving the former appointment unaltered and untouched, it merely proposes to abolish the latter; and, as far as it is practicable, to lay the christian world under an interdict. The real state of the case is as follows: On the subject of baptism, and particularly whether it is applicable to infants, opinions are divided, and the majority have come, as we conceive, to an erroneous conclusion. How do they propose to remedy this evil? By throwing all manner of obstacles in the way of an approach to the Lord's table, and, as far as their power extends, rendering it impracticable, by clogging it with a condition at which conscience revolts. They propose to punish men for the involuntary neglect of one ordinance, by

compelling them to abandon the other; and because they are uneasy at perceiving them perform but one half of their duty, oblige them, as far as lies in their power, to omit the whole. I must confess I feel no partiality for those violent remedies, which, under the pretence of reforming, destroy; or for that passion for order which would rather witness the entire desolation of the sanctuary, than a defalcation of its rites; and in spite of all the efforts of sophistry, I must be permitted to believe that our Lord's express injunction on his followers, "do this in remembrance of me," is a better reason for the celebration of the communion than can be adduced for its neglect.

## Section III.

*The Argument from Apostolical Precedent, and from the different Significations of the two Institutions, considered.*

In vindication of their practice, our opponents are wont to urge the order of administration in the primitive and apostolic practice. They remind us that the members of the primitive church were universally baptized; that, if we acknowledge its constitution in that respect to be expressive of the mind of Christ, we are bound to follow that precedent, and that to deviate from it, in this particular, is

virtually to impeach either the wisdom of our Lord, or the fidelity of his apostles.*

With respect to the *universality* of the practice of christian baptism, having already stated our views, it is not necessary to repeat what has already been advanced, or to recapitulate the reasons on which we found our opinion, that it was not extended to such as were converted previous to our Lord's resurrection. Subsequently to that period, we admit, without hesitation, that the converts to the christian faith submitted to that ordinance, prior to their reception into the christian church. As little are we disposed to deny that it is at present the duty of the sincere believer to follow their example, and that, supposing him to be clearly convinced of the nature and import of baptism, he would be guilty of a criminal irregularity who neglected to attend to it, previous to his entering into christian fellowship. On the obligation of both the positive rites enjoined in

* "The order of administration," says Mr. Booth, "in the primitive and apostolic practice, now demands our notice. That the apostles, when endued with power from on high, understood our Lord in the sense for which we plead, and practised accordingly, is quite evident. Then they that gladly received his word were, what? admitted to the Lord's table? No, but baptized:—*And the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls; and they continued stedfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer.* If our brethren do not look upon the apostolic precedent as expressive of the mind of Christ, and as a pattern for future imitation, to the end of the world, they must consider the apostles as either ignorant of our Lord's will, or as unfaithful in the performance of it." —*Booth's Apology*, pp. 47, 48.

the New Testament, and the prior claim of baptism to the attention of such as are properly enlightened on the subject, we have no dispute. All we contend for is, that they do not so depend one upon the other that the conscientious omission of the first, forfeits the privilege, or cancels the duty, of observing the second; nor are we able to perceive that what, in the present instance, is styled apostolic precedent, at all decides the question. To attempt to determine under what circumstances the highest precedent possesses the form of law, involves a difficult and delicate inquiry; for, while it is acknowledged that much deference is due to primitive example, there were certain usages in apostolical times, to which few would attempt to revive. There is one general rule, however, applicable to the subject, which is, that no matter of fact is entitled to be considered as an authoritative precedent, which *necessarily* arose out of existing circumstances, so that in the then present state of things, it could not fail to have occurred. The foundation of this rule is obvious. Nothing is of the nature of law but what emanates from the will of the legislator; but when a particular fact, recorded in an historical narration, is so situated, that the contrary would have appeared incongruous or absurd; in other words, when it could not fail to be the result of previous occurrences, such a fact is destitute of the essential characteristic of a law; it has no apparent dependence upon a superior will.

Hence many practices occur in the history of the apostolic transactions, which it is universally admitted we are not obliged to imitate. It is an unquestionable fact, that the eucharist was first celebrated with unleavened bread, on the evening, in an upper room, and to Jews only; but as we distinctly perceive that these particulars originated in the peculiar circumstances of the time, we are far from considering them as binding. On the same principle, we account for the members of the primitive church consisting only of such as were baptized, without erecting that circumstance into an invariable rule of action. When we recollect that no error or mistake subsisted, or could subsist, among christians at that period, we are compelled to regard it as the necessary consequence of the state of opinions then prevalent. While all the faithful concurred in their interpretation of the law which enjoins it, how is it possible to suppose it neglected? or whence could rebaptized communicants have been drawn? Is this circumstance, to which so much importance is attached, of such a nature that no account can be given of it, but upon the principle of our opponents? or is it the necessary consequence of the then actual situation of the church? If the latter be admitted, it ceases, for the reason already alleged, to be a precedent, or a rule for the direction of future times.

We are willing to go a step further, and to acknowledge that he who, convinced of the divine

origin of christianity by the ministry of the apostles, had refused to be baptized, would, at that period, have been justly debarred from receiving the sacramental elements. While the apostles were yet living, and daily exemplifying the import of their commission before the eyes of the people, it would have been impossible to pretend ignorance; nor could that sincerity fail to be suspected, which was not accompanied with an implicit submission to their authority.

"He that receiveth you," saith our Lord, "receiveth me; he that rejecteth you, rejecteth me." Agreeably to which we find that the disciple whom Jesus loved did not scruple to use the following language:—"By this ye know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error; he that is of God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us." Such a conduct was perfectly proper. As there can be but two guides in religion, reason and authority, and every man must form his belief, either by following the light of his own mind, or the information and instruction he derives from others; so, it is equally evident, it is only by the last of these methods that the benefit of a new revelation can be diffused. Either we must suppose an infinite multitude of miracles performed on the minds of individuals to convey the knowledge of supernatural truths, or that one or more are thus preternaturally enlightened, and invested with a commission to speak in the name of God to others; endowed, at the same time, with such peculiar

powers, such a control over nature, or such a foresight of future contingencies, as shall be sufficient to accredit and establish his mission.

He who refuses to submit to the guidance of persons thus attested and accredited, must be considered as virtually renouncing the revelation imparted, and, as the necessary consequence, forfeiting his interest in its blessings. On these grounds it is not difficult to perceive that a primitive convert, or rather pretended convert, who, without doubting that baptism, in the way in which we practise it, formed a part of the apostolic commission, had refused compliance, would have been deemed unworthy christian communion, not on account of any specific connexion betwixt the two ordinances, but on account of his evincing a spirit totally repugnant to the mind of Christ. By rejecting the only authority established upon earth for the direction of conscience, and the termination of doubts and controversies, he would, undoubtedly, have been repelled as a contumacious schismatic. But what imaginable resemblance is there betwixt such a mode of procedure, and the conduct of our pædobaptist brethren, who oppose no legitimate authority, impeach no part of the apostolic testimony, but mistaking (in our judgement at least) its import in one particular, decline a practice which many of them would be the first to comply with, were they once convinced it was the dictate of duty, and the will of heaven? In the one case, we perceive open rebellion, in the other,

involuntary error; in the one, the pride which opposes itself to the dictates of inspired wisdom, in the other, a specimen (an humbling one it is true) of that infirmity, in consequence of which we all "see but in part, and know but in part." Since, whatever degree of prejudice or inattention we may be disposed to impute to the abettors of infant sprinkling, the principles on which they proceed are essentially different from those which could alone have occasioned the introduction of that practice in apostolic times, we are at a loss to conceive the propriety of classing them together, or of animadverting upon them with equal severity. The apostles would have repelled from their communion men, who, while they professed to be followers of Christ, refused submission to his inspired messengers; in other words, they would have rejected some of the worst of men: therefore, say our opponents, we feel ourselves justified in excluding multitudes whom we acknowledge to be the best. I am at a loss whether most to admire the logic, the equity, or the modesty of such a conclusion.

Besides, this reasoning from precedent is of so flexible a nature that it may with equal ease be employed in a contrary direction, and be turned to the annoyance of our opponents. As it is an acknowledged fact, that in primitive times all the faithful were admitted to an equality of participation in every christian privilege; to repel the great majority of them on account of an error, acknow-

ledged not to be fundamental, is at once a wide departure from the apostolic example, and a palpable contradiction to the very words employed in its first institution; "drink ye all of it; do this in remembrance of me:" words addressed, as has already been proved, to persons who had not received christian baptism. If it be replied, that though all christians originally communicated, yet from the period of the Pentecost, at least, they were all previously initiated by immersion, the inquiry returns, were they baptized on account of the necessary connexion of that appointment with the eucharist, or purely in deference to the apostolic injunction? To assert the former would be palpably begging the question; and if the latter is affirmed, we reply, that as they practised as they did, in deference to the will of God, so our pædobaptist brethren, in declining the practice which we adopt, regulate their conduct by the same principle.

The shew of conformity to apostolic precedent is with the advocates of strict communion, and nothing more; the substance and reality are with us. Their conformity is to the letter, ours to the spirit; theirs circumstantial and incidental, ours radical and essential. In withholding the signs from those who are in possession of the thing signified, in refusing to communicate the symbols of the great sacrifice to those who are equally with themselves sprinkled by its blood and sharers of its efficacy, in dividing the regenerate into two classes, believers and communicants, and confining

the church to the narrow limits of a sect, they have violated more maxims of antiquity, and receded further from the example of the apostles, than any class of christians on record.

We live in a mutable world, and the diversity of sentiment which has arisen in the christian church on the subject of baptism, has placed things in a new situation, and has given birth to a case which can be determined only by an appeal to the general principles of the gospel, and to those injunctions in particular, which are designed to regulate the conduct of christians, whose judgement in points of secondary moment differs. These we shall have occasion to discuss in another part of this treatise, where it will, we trust, be satisfactorily shewn that we are furnished with a clue fully sufficient for our guidance; and when we consider the impossibility of comprehending, in any code whatever, every possible combination of future occurrences and events, we shall perceive the necessity of having recourse to those large and comprehensive maxims, which the prospective wisdom of the Father of lights, and the Author of revelation has abundantly supplied.

Were it not that more are capable of numbering arguments, than of weighing them, the mention of the following might be omitted. The significations of the two positive ordinances of the gospel are urged in proof of the necessity of baptism preceding the Lord's supper. The first, we are reminded by our opponents, is styled by theologians

the sacrament of *regeneration,* or of initiation; the second, the sacrament of nutrition.* To argue from metaphors is rarely a conclusive mode of reasoning; but if it were, the regenerate state of our pædobaptist brethren would surely afford a much better reason for admitting them to the *sacrament of nutrition,* than their misconception of a particular command for prohibiting them, unless we choose to affirm that the shadow is of more importance than the substance, or that the sacrament of nutrition is not intended to nourish.

Their actual possession of spiritual life, in consequence of their union to the Head of the church, necessarily implies a title to every christian privilege, by which such a life is cherished and maintained, unless there were an express prohibition to the contrary; nor is it to be doubted that the acknowledgement of pædobaptists, as christians, implies a competence to enter into the full import of the rites commemorative of our Lord's death and passion. To consider the Lord's supper, however, as a mere commemoration of that event, is to entertain a very inadequate view of it. If we

* "In submitting to baptism," says Mr. Booth, "we have an emblem of our union and communion with Jesus Christ, as our great Representative, in his death, burial, and resurrection. And as in baptism we profess to have renewed spiritual life, so in communicating at the Lord's table, we have the emblems of that heavenly food by which we live, by which we grow, and by virtue of which we hope to live for ever. Hence theological writers have often called baptism the sacrament of *regeneration,* or of initiation, and the Lord's supper the sacrament of *nutrition.*"—*Booth's Apology.*

credit St. Paul, it is also a *federal rite* in which, in token of our reconciliation with God, we eat and drink in his presence: it is a feast upon a sacrifice, by which we become partakers at the altar, not less really, though in a manner more elevated and spiritual, than those who under the ancient economy presented their offerings in the temple. In this ordinance, the cup is a spiritual participation of the blood, the bread of the body, of the crucified Saviour:* and as our pædobaptist brethren are allowed to be in covenant with God, their title to every federal rite follows of course, unless it is barred by some clear, unequivocal, declaration of scripture; instead of which, we meet with nothing on the opposite side but precarious conjectures, and remote analogies.

Our opponents are extremely fond of representing baptism, under the New Testament, as essential as circumcision under the old, inferring from thence that no unbaptized person is admissible to the eucharist, for the same reason that no one who was not circumcised, was permitted to partake of the paschal feast. But, besides that this is to reason from analogy, a practice against which, when applied to the discussion of positive institutes, they on other occasions earnestly protest, the analogy fails in the most essential points. Circumcision is expressly stated as a necessary condition of admission to the passover: a similar statement respecting baptism will decide the con-

* 1 Cor. xi. 26.

troversy. The neglect of circumcision, which could proceed from nothing but presumptuous impiety, incurred the sentence of *excision; that soul shall be cut off from the people.* Whatever may be meant beside by that commination, it will not be doubted that it included the entire forfeiture of the advantages of that peculiar covenant, which God was pleased to establish with the Israelitish people: and the exclusion from the paschal feast, as well as from the other sacrifices, was the necessary appendage of that forfeiture.

The most violent baptist will not presume to insinuate that the neglect of baptism, from a misconception of its nature, is exposed to a similar penalty. It is evident, from the history of the Old Testament, that an Israelite became disqualified for sharing in whatever privileges distinguished that nation, only in consequence of such a species of criminality as cut him off from the covenant. An interest in that covenant (the particular nature of which it is not necessary to insist upon) and a free access to all the privileges and institutions of the Jewish people, were inseparable, so that nothing would have appeared to an ancient Jew more absurd, than to disunite the covenant itself from the federal rites by which it was ratified and confirmed. The invention of this ingenious paradox belongs exclusively to the abettors of strict communion, who in the same breath affirm that pædobaptists are entitled to all the blessings of the new and everlasting covenant, and forbidden

to commemorate it; and scruple not to assert, that though interested as much as themselves in the great sacrifice, it would be presumption in them to approach the sacred symbols, which are appointed for no other purpose but to hold it forth. It is certainly with a very ill grace that the champions of such monstrous and unparalleled positions, ridicule their opponents for inventing a new and eccentric theology.*

Before I dismiss this head, I must remark, that in insisting upon the prior claim which baptism possesses to the attention of a christian convert, the advocates of strict communion triumph without an opponent. We know of none who contend for the propriety of inverting the natural order of the christian sacraments, where they can both be attended to, that is, when the nature of each is clearly understood and confessed. To administer

* "The last century," says Mr. Booth, page 36, "was the grand æra of improvement, of prodigious improvement, in light and liberty. In light, as well divine as philosophical, by the labours of a Bacon, a Boyle, and a Newton. In pretended theological knowledge by those of a Jesse or a Bunyan. Did the former, by deep researches into the system of nature, surprise and instruct the world, by discoveries of which mankind had never before conceived? The latter, penetrating into the gospel system, amused mankind by casting new light on the positive institutions of Jesus Christ, and by placing baptism among things of little importance in the christian religion, of which no ancient theologian ever dreamed—none we have reason to think that ever loved the Lord Redeemer." A little after he adds, "The practical claim of dispensing power by Jesse and Bunyan, made way for the *inglorious* liberty of treating positive institutions in the house of God just as professors please."

them under any other circumstance, it will be acknowledged, is impracticable. We administer baptism, let it be remembered, *in every instance* in which our opponents will allow it ought to be administered; and the only difference is, that we have fellowship, in another ordinance, with those members of the body of Christ whom they reject. Let it once be demonstrated that the obligation of commemorating the Saviour's death, is not sufficiently supported by his express injunction, but derives its force and validity from its inseparable connexion with a preceding sacrament, and we are prepared to abandon our practice, as a presumptuous innovation on the laws of Christ. Till then, we shall not be much moved by the charge of claiming a dispensing power, with which we are frequently accused,—a power which I presume no protestant ever dreamed of usurping, and the assumption of which implies such impiety as ought to render a christian reluctant to urge such a charge.

To remind us of "the destruction of Nadab and Abihu by fire from heaven, the breach that was made upon Uzzah, the stigma fixed, and the curses denounced upon Jerusalem, together with the fall and ruin of all mankind, by our first father's disobedience to a positive command," is more calculated to inflame the passions, than to elicit truth, or conduct the controversy to a satisfactory issue. When the sole inquiry is, what *is* the law of Christ, and we are fully persuaded that our interpretation

of it is more natural and reasonable than that of our opponents, it is not a little absurd, to charge us with assuming a claim of dispensing with its authority. We know that he commanded his followers to be baptized; we know also that he commanded them to shew forth his death till he came: but where shall we look for a tittle of his law which forbids such as sincerely, though erroneously, believe themselves to have complied with the first, to attend to the last of these injunctions? Where is the scriptural authority for *resting* the obligation of the eucharist, not on the precept that enjoins it, but on the previous reception of baptism? As the scripture is totally silent on this point, we are not disposed to accept the officious assistance of our brethren in supplying its deficiency; and beg permission to remind them, that to add to the word of God, is equally criminal with taking away from it.

Do we neglect the administration of that rite to any class of persons, whose state of mind is such as would render it acceptable to God? Do we neglect to illustrate and enforce it in our public ministrations? Are we accustomed to insinuate that serious inquiry into the mind of Christ on this subject, is of little, or no importance? Are we found to decline its administration in any case whatever, in which our accusers would not equally decline it? Nothing of this can be alleged. Do they argue from the language of the original institute, from the examples of scripture, and the

precedent of the early ages, that it is the duty of believers, without exception, to be immersed in the name of Jesus? So do we. Are they disposed to look upon such as have neglected, whether from inattention or prejudice, to perform this duty, as *mistaken christians?* We also consider them in the same light. In what respect then are we guilty of dispensing with divine laws? Merely because we are incapable of perceiving that an involuntary mistake on this subject, disqualifies for christian communion. But how extremely unjust to load us, on that account, with the charge of assuming a dispensing power, when the only ground on which we maintain our opinion, whether true or false, is our conviction that it is founded on a legitimate interpretation of the oracles of God. The dispute is not concerning their authority, but their meaning; and we dispense with baptism in no other sense, than that of denying it to be in all cases essential to communion; in which whether we are mistaken or not, is a point open to controversy; but to be guilty first of a *misnomer* in defining our sentiments, and afterwards to convert an odious and erroneous appellation into an argument, is the height of injustice.

With what propriety our practice is compared to that of the church of Rome, in confining the communion to one kind, the intelligent reader will be at no loss to perceive.* In that, as in various

* "It must, I think, be acknowledged," says Mr. Booth, "even by our brethren themselves, that we have as good a

other instances, that church, in order to raise the dignity of the priesthood, assumes a power of mutilating a divine ordinance. We are chargeable with no mutilation, nor presume in the smallest particular to innovate in the celebration of either sacraments; we merely refuse to acknowledge that dependence, one upon the other, on which the confidence of our opponents is so ill sustained by the silence of scripture.

We will close this part of the discussion by remarking that there is a happy equivocation in the word *dispense,* which has contributed not a little to its introduction into the present controversy. It may either mean that we do not insist upon baptism as an indispensable condition of communion, in which sense the charge is true, but nothing to the purpose, since it is a mere statement, in other words, of our actual practice: or it may intend that we knowingly and deliberately deviate from the injunctions of scripture; a serious accusation, which requires not to be asserted, but proved.

warrant for omitting an essential branch of an ordinance, or to reverse the order in which the *constituent parts* of an ordinance were originally administered, as we have to lay aside a divine institution, or to change the order in which two different appointments were first fixed. And if so, were a reformed and converted catholic, still retaining the popish error of communion in *one kind* only, desirous of having fellowship with our brethren at the Lord's table, they must, if they would act consistently, on their present hypothesis, admit him to partake of the bread, though, from a principle of conscience, he absolutely refused the wine in that sacred institution."—*Booth's Apology,* p. 51.

## Section IV.

### *Our supposed Opposition to the Universal Suffrages of the Church, considered.*

In admitting to our communion those whom we esteem *unbaptized,* we are accused of a presumptuous departure from the sentiments of all parties and denominations throughout the christian world, who, however they may have differed upon other subjects, have unanimously concurred in considering baptism as a necessary preliminary to communion.*

* This charge is urged with much declamatory vehemence by Mr. Booth, in his Apology :—"A sentiment so peculiar, and a conduct so uncommon," he says, "in regard to this institution, ought to be well supported by the testimony of the Holy Ghost. For were all the christian churches now in the world asked, except those few who plead for free communion, whether they thought it lawful to admit *unbaptized* believers to fellowship at the Lord's table, there is reason to believe they would readily unite in the declaration of Paul, *we have no such custom, neither the churches of God that were before us.* Yes, considering the novelty of their sentiments and conduct, and what a contradiction they are to the faith and order of the whole christian church; considering that it never was disputed, as far as I can learn, prior to the sixteenth century, by orthodox or heterodox, by papist or protestant, whether *unbaptized* believers should be admitted to the Lord's table, they all agreeing in the contrary practice, however much they differed in matters of equal importance; it may be reasonably expected, and it is by us justly demanded, that the truth of their sentiment, and the rectitude of their conduct, should be *proved, fully proved,* from the records of inspiration."—*Booth's Apology,* p. 43.

The first remark which occurs on this mode of reasoning is, that it is merely an *argumentum ad verecundiam*, an attempt to overawe by the weight of authority, without pretending to enter into the merits of the controversy. It assumes for its basis the impossibility of the universal prevalence of error, which if it be once admitted, all hopes of extending the boundaries of knowledge must be relinquished. My next observation is, that it comes with peculiar infelicity from the members of a sect, who upon a subject of much greater moment have presumed to relinquish the precedent, and arraign the practice of the whole christian world, as far at least as they have been exhibited in these later ages.

"Quis tulerit Gracchos de seditione querentes?"

After setting an example of revolt, it is too late for them to inculcate the duty of submission.

The question of the necessary dependence of communion on baptism, being of no practical moment whatever in any other circumstances than our own, it is not to be wondered at, if it has never been subjected to scrutiny; since cases of conscience, among which this inquiry may be classed, are rarely if ever investigated until circumstances occur which render their discussion necessary. But as infant sprinkling is valid in the esteem of all but the baptists, and there is no pretence for considering the latter as unbaptized, it is not easy to conceive what motive could exist for

making it an object of serious attention. That crude and erroneous conceptions should prevail upon questions, the decision of which could have no influence on practice, will not surprise those who reflect, that truth has been usually elicited by controversy, and that on subjects of too great importance to be entirely overlooked, opinions have prevailed to a great extent, which are now universally exploded. Though the employment of coercion in the affairs of conscience, is equally repugnant to the dictates of reason and of scripture, it was for ages successively resorted to by every party in its turn; nor was it till towards the close of the seventeenth century that the principle of toleration was established on a broad and scientific basis, by the immortal writings of Milton and Locke. These reflections are obvious; but there are others which tend more immediately to annihilate the objection under consideration. It is well known that from a very early period the most extravagant notions prevailed in the church with respect to the efficacy of baptism, and its absolute necessity in order to attain salvation. The descent of the human mind from the spirit to the letter, from what is vital and intellectual, to what is ritual and external in religion, is the true source of idolatry and superstition in all the multifarious forms they have assumed; and as it began early to corrupt the religion of nature, or more properly of patriarchal tradition, so it soon obscured the lustre, and destroyed the simplicity of the christian

institute. In proportion as genuine devotion declined, the love of pomp and ceremony increased; the few and simple rites of christianity were extolled beyond all reasonable bounds; new ones were invented, to which mysterious meanings were attached, till the religion of the New Testament became, in process of time, as insupportable a yoke as the Mosaic law. The first effects of this spirit are discernible in the ideas entertained of the ordinance, so closely connected with the subject of the present treatise. From an erroneous interpretation of the figurative language of a few passages in scripture, in which the sign is identified with the thing signified, very similar to the mistake which afterwards led to transubstantiation, it was universally supposed that baptism was invariably accompanied with a supernatural effect, which totally changed the state and character of the candidate, and constituted him a child of God, and an heir of the kingdom of heaven. Hence it was almost constantly denoted by the terms *illumination, regeneration,* and others, expressive of the highest operations of the Spirit; and as it was believed to obtain the plenary remission of all past sins, it was often, in order to ensure that benefit, purposely deferred to the latest period of life. Thus Eusebius informs us that the Emperor Constantine, "finding his end fast approaching, judged it a fit season for purifying himself from his offences, and cleansing his soul from that guilt which, in common with other mortals, he had contracted,

which he believed was to be effected by the power of mysterious words, and the saving laver." "This," said he, addressing the surrounding bishops, "is the period I have so long hoped and prayed for, the period of obtaining the salvation of God." Passing with the utmost rapidity through the preparatory stage, that of a catechumen, he hastened to what he regarded as his consummation; and no sooner was the ceremony completed, than he arrayed himself in white garments, and laid aside the imperial purple, in token of his bidding adieu to all secular concerns.* We have here a fair specimen of the sentiments which were universally adopted upon this subject in ancient times. Even Justin Martyr, who flourished about the middle of the second century, confounds baptism with regeneration. "Whoever," says he, "believe the things which are affirmed by us to be true, and promise to live accordingly, are afterwards conducted to a place where there is water, and are regenerated by the same method of regeneration which we have experienced."† Theophilus, a contemporary writer, and the sixth bishop of Antioch, holds the same language. Tertullian, the earliest and most learned of the Latin fathers, exclaims with rapture, "O happy sacrament, by which, being washed from the former sins of our blindness, we are delivered unto eternal life."‡ And

* Eusebius in Vitâ Constantini, lib. iv. c. 61, 62.

† Apol. p. 159, Ed. 1651.

‡ De Baptismo, Ed. 1676, p. 224.

agreeable to the fantastic style of imagery which characterizes his writings, he appears to be particularly delighted with denominating christians, little fishes, who are born in water, and are safe only in that element. Were we to attempt accurately to trace the progress of these opinions, in the first ages, and adequately to represent the extent of their prevalence, we should be under the necessity, by numberless quotations from the fathers, of extending this inquiry to a most unreasonable length.

Suffice it to remark, that there is scarcely a writer in the three first centuries, to descend no lower, who has not spoken upon this subject in a manner, which the advocates for strict communion, at least, would deem unscriptural and improper: scarcely one, from whom we should not be taught to infer that baptism was absolutely necessary to salvation. That this is the doctrine which pervades the formularies of the church of England, is too evident to require to be insisted on; nor is it less so, that similar sentiments on this head, are exhibited, to a greater or less extent, in the creeds of most, if not all established churches. Is it surprising then, that those who contend for baptism as essential to salvation, should consider it as an essential prerequisite to communion? Or is it not a much juster occasion for surprise, that our opponents should urge us with an inference which it is acknowledged was deduced from erroneous premises, as though we were under

the necessity of admitting a conclusion, while the only argument by which it is supported is given up ?*

For our parts, we must be permitted to look with suspicion on the genuine product of error; no more expecting to derive truth from erroneous premises, than grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles. In the present instance, there is no doubt that the opinion of the absolute necessity of baptism, previous to communion, sprang from those lofty and superstitious ideas respecting its efficacy, which our opponents would be the first to disclaim. Ask a Roman Catholic, a Lutheran, or a member of the church of England, on what ground he rests the absolute necessity of the baptismal rite, as a qualification for the eucharist; and each of them will concur in reminding you, that it is by that ordinance we become the children of God, and heirs of his kingdom. The Augsburg Confession, to which all the Lutheran churches are supposed to assent, and which was solemnly presented to Charles the Fifth at the imperial diet, as the authentic exhibition of their sentiments, expresses itself in the following terms:—

* Considering the firm hold which these unscriptural ideas respecting baptism had taken of the minds of men, throughout all parts of the christian world, at an early period, and recollecting the confidence with which ancient writers assert the impossibility even of infants being saved without baptism, the practice of infant sprinkling seems an almost necessary result. Who, with such a conviction, possessed of the common feelings of a parent, could fail to secure to his offspring such infinite benefits ?

"Concerning baptism, they (the followers of Luther) teach that it is *necessary to salvation;* that by baptism is offered the grace of God; and that children are to be baptized, who, being presented to God by baptism, are received into the grace of God. They condemn the anabaptists, who disapprove of the baptism of children, and affirm that children are *saved* without baptism."* Some of the most learned divines of the church of England have contended that baptism is not only regeneration, but justification; and have made elaborate attempts to explode every other notion of that blessing.†

Such are the principles whence this vaunted unanimity is derived; principles which our brethren reprobate on all occasions, while, with a strange inconsistency, they accuse us of presumption in refusing our assent to their legitimate consequences. Let it be recollected also, that the points in which they, in common with ourselves, dissent from a vast majority of the professors of christianity, are of incomparably more importance than the particular in which they agree; for whether baptism be, on all occasions, a necessary preliminary to communion, is a trivial question, compared to that which respects the identity of baptism with regeneration.

The argument from authority, however, when fairly stated, is entirely in our favour; nor would

* Augsburg Confession, Article IX.

† See Waterland's Sermon on that subject.

it be easy to assign an example of bolder deviation from the universal practice of the christian church, than the conduct of our opponents supplies. They are the only persons in the world of whom we have either heard or read, who contend for the exclusion of genuine christians from the Lord's table; who ever attempted to distinguish them into two classes, such as are entitled to commemorate their Saviour's death, and such as are excluded from that privilege. In what page of the voluminous records of the church is such a distinction to be traced? Or what intimation shall we find in scripture of an intention to create such an invidious disparity among the members of the same body? Did it ever enter the conception of any but baptists, that a right to the sign could be separated from the thing signified; or that there could be a description of persons interested in all the blessings of the christian covenant, yet not entitled to partake of its sacraments and seals?

In the judgement of all religious communities besides, and in every period of the church, excommunication or exclusion has been considered as a stigma, never to be inflicted but on men of ill lives, or on the abettors of heresy and schism; and though innumerable instances have occurred, in which the best of men have, in fact, been excluded, they were either accused of fundamental error, or adjudged, on account of their obstinate resistance to the authority of the church, to have forfeited the privileges of christians. They were

not excommunicated under the character of mistaken brethren, which is the light in which we profess to consider pædobaptists, but as incurable heretics and schismatics. The puritans were expelled the church of England on the same principle; and although at the restoration, a vindictive spirit was unquestionably the chief motive to those disgraceful proceedings, yet the pretensions of ecclesiastical authority were carried so high in those unhappy times, as to furnish the pretext for considering them as contumacious contemners of the power, and disturbers of the peace of the church. In the whole course of ecclesiastical proceedings, no maxim was more fully recognised, than that the sword of excommunication cut asunder the ties of fraternity, and consigned the offender, unless he repented, to hopeless perdition.

In some dissenting societies also, it is true, creeds are established which every candidate for admission is expected to subscribe; and though these summaries of christian doctrine frequently contain articles, which, admitting them to be true, are not fundamental, they were originally deemed such by their fabricators, or supposed, at least, to be accompanied with such a plenitude of evidence as no sincere inquirer could resist; and they are continued under the same persuasion.

The right of rejecting those whom Christ has received; of refusing the communion of eminently holy men, on account of unessential differences of opinion, is not the avowed tenet of any sect or

community in Christendom, with the exception of the majority of the baptists, who, while they are at variance with the whole world on a point of such magnitude, are loud in accusing their brethren of singularity. If we have presumed to resist the current of opinion, it is on a subject of no practical moment; it respects an obscure and neglected corner of theology; while their singularity is replete with most alarming consequences, destroys at once the unity of the church, and pronounces a sentence of excommunication on the whole christian world.

Having, without disguise, exhibited, in their full force, the reasoning of the advocates of strict communion, and replied to it in the best manner we are able, it must be left to the impartial reader to determine on which side the evidence preponderates; of which he will be able to judge more completely, when we have stated at large the grounds of the opposite practice, which we have reserved for the Second Part of this treatise; where we shall have an opportunity of noticing some minor objections, which could not be so conveniently adverted to in the former.

# PART II.

## THE POSITIVE GROUNDS ON WHICH WE JUSTIFY THE PRACTICE OF MIXED COMMUNION.

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### SECTION I.

*Free Communion urged, from the Obligation of Brotherly Love.*

THAT we are commanded, in terms the most absolute, to cultivate a sincere and warm attachment to the members of Christ's body, and that no branch of christian duty is inculcated more frequently, or with more force, will be admitted without controversy. Our Lord instructs us to consider it as the principal mark or feature by which his followers are to be distinguished in every age. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another. As I have loved you, ye ought also to love one another;" whence it is evident that the pattern we are to follow is the love which Christ bore to his church, which is undoubtedly extended indiscriminately to every member. The cultivation of this disposition is affirmed to be one of the most essential objects

of the christian revelation, as well as the most precious fruit of that faith by which it is embraced. "Seeing," says St. Peter, "ye have purified your hearts by obeying the truth, unto an unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." Agreeably to which, the beloved disciple affirms it to be the chief evidence of our being in a state of grace and salvation. "By this we know that we are passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Let it also be remembered, that the mode in which we are commanded to exhibit and express this most eminent grace of the Spirit, is the preservation of union, a careful avoidance of every temper and practice which might produce alienation and division. To this purpose, St. Paul reminds us of that union which subsists betwixt the several parts of the body, the harmony with which its respective functions are carried on, where the noblest organ is incapable of dispensing with the action of the meanest, together with that quick feeling of sympathy which pervades the whole; all which, he tells us, is contrived and adjusted to prevent a schism in the body. In applying this illustration to the subject before us, it is impossible not to perceive that when one part of Christ's mystical body refuses to cooperate with another in a principal spiritual function, such as communing at the Lord's table, that very evil subsists against which we are so anxiously guarded; and, what is more extraordinary, subsists upon the principle we are

opposing, by divine appointment. In the last prayer our Saviour uttered, in which he expressly includes all who should hereafter believe, he earnestly intreats that they may be all one, even as he and his Father were one, that the world might be furnished with a convincing evidence of his mission. For some ages the object of that prayer was realized, in the harmony which prevailed amongst christians, whose religion was a bond of union more strict and tender than the ties of consanguinity; and with the appellation of brethren, they associated all the sentiments of endearment that relation implied. To see men of the most contrary character and habits, the learned and the rude, the most polished and the most uncultivated, the inhabitants of countries alienated from each other by institutions the most repugnant, and by contests the most violent, forgetting their ancient animosity, and blending into one mass, at the command of a person whom they had never seen, and who had ceased to be an inhabitant of this world, was an astonishing spectacle. Such a sudden assimilation of the most discordant materials, such love issuing from hearts naturally selfish, and giving birth to a new race and progeny, could be ascribed to nothing but a divine interposition: it was an experimental proof of the commencement of that kingdom of God, that celestial economy, by which the powers of the future world are imparted to the present. When we turn from contemplating this, to the

practice under consideration, we see an opposite phenomenon; a sect of christians coming to an open rupture and separation in point of communion with the whole christian world; and we ask whether it be possible to reconcile such a conduct with the import of our Saviour's prayer. If it is not, it must be condemned as anti-christian, unless we hesitate to affirm, that whatever is repugnant to the mind of Christ, merits that appellation. Let it be remembered, too, that though the prayer we have adduced was uttered by Him who possessed a perfect knowledge of futurity, and was thoroughly apprized of the diversities of sentiment which would arise among his followers, he was not deterred by that consideration from comprehending in this his desire of union, all who should hereafter believe on his name.

Whatever attachment our opponents may profess to those whom they exclude, their behaviour, it must be acknowledged, is so ill adapted to accredit their professions, that, in the eyes of the world, who judge by sensible appearances, and are strangers to subtle distinctions, such a proceeding will inevitably be considered as a practical declaration that the persons from whom they separate, are *not* christians. There is no reason to doubt that the precepts of the gospel on this, as well as every other branch of morals, are to be interpreted on a liberal scale; and that when they enjoin any particular disposition in general terms, we must consider the injunction as comprehending

all its natural demonstrations, all its genuine expressions. But to refuse the communion of sincere christians, is not a natural expression of christian love, but so diametrically opposite, that we may fairly put it to the conscience of those who contend for such a measure, whether they find it possible to carry it into execution without an inward struggle, without feeling emotions of sorrow and concern. It is to inflict a wound on the very heart of charity, for no fault, for none at least of which the offender is conscious, for none which such treatment has the remotest tendency to correct; and if this is not being guilty of "beating our fellow-servant," we must despair of ascertaining the meaning of terms.

Were the children of the same parent, in consequence of the different construction they put on a disputed clause in their father's will, to refuse to eat at the same table, or to drink out of the same cup, it would be ridiculous for them to pretend that their attachment to each other remained undiminished; nor is it less so for christians to assert that their withdrawing from communion with their brethren, is no interruption to their mutual harmony and affection. It is a serious and awful interruption, and will ever be considered in that light as long as the interior sentiments of the mind continue to be interpreted by their natural signs. I have known more instances than one of good men complaining of the uneasiness, I might say the anguish,

they felt on those occasions, when they witnessed some of their most intimate friends, persons of exalted piety, compelled, after joining in the other branches of worship, to withdraw from the Lord's table, as though "they had no part or lot in the matter." We have been accustomed to conceive that the dictates of the Holy Ghost were always in harmony with his operations, the precepts of the gospel with its spirit; and that nothing was enjoined as matter of duty on christians, which offered violence to the best feelings of the renewed heart. We have always supposed that, by the law of Christ, we were called to mortify the old man only with his affections and lusts; but if the doctrine of our opponents be true, we shall be frequently summoned to the strange discipline of repressing the movements of christian charity; and the practice of quenching the Spirit, instead of being regarded with horror, will become on many occasions an indispensable duty. For this new and unheard-of conflict, in which the injunctions of Christ, and the dictates of his Spirit, propel us in opposite directions, we acknowledge ourselves unprepared.

In order to place this part of our subject in its strongest light, it is necessary to recur to what we have suggested before, respecting the two-fold import of the eucharist, that it is first a feast upon a sacrifice, in which we are actual partakers by faith of the body and blood of the Redeemer offered upon the cross. Considered in this view,

it is a *federal rite*, in which we receive the pledge of reconciliation, while we avouch the Lord to be our God, and surround his table as a part of his family. In its secondary import, it is intended as a solemn recognition of each other as members of Christ, and consequently, in the language of St. Paul, "as one body, and one bread." Now we either acknowledge pædobaptists to be christians, or we do not. If not, let us speak out without reserve, and justify their exclusion at once, upon a broad and consistent basis. But if we reject a sentiment so illiberal, why refuse to unite with them in an appointment, which, as far as its social import is concerned, has no other object than to express that fraternal attachment which we actually feel? Why select as the line of demarcation, the signal of disunion, that particular branch of worship, which, if we credit the inspired writers, was ordained, in preference to every other, to be the symbol of christian unity? That they are equally capable with ourselves of deriving the spiritual edification and improvement attached to this ordinance, is implied in the acknowledgement of their being christians; while with respect to its import as a social act, or an act of communion, it implies neither more nor less than a recognition of their claim to that title. It neither implies that they are baptized, nor the contrary; it has no retrospective view to that ordinance whatever; it implies neither more nor less than that they are members of Christ, and the objects

consequently of that fraternal attachment, which our opponents themselves profess to feel.

## Section II.

*The Practice of Open Communion argued, from the express Injunction of Scripture respecting the Conduct to be maintained by sincere Christians who differ in their Religious Sentiments.*

We are expressly commanded in the Scriptures to tolerate in the church those diversities of opinion which are not inconsistent with salvation. We learn from the New Testament that a diversity of views subsisted in the times of the apostles, betwixt the Jewish and Gentile converts especially, the former retaining an attachment to the ancient law, and conceiving the most essential parts of it to be still in force; the latter, from correcter views, rejecting it altogether. Some declined the use of certain kinds of meat forbidden by Moses, which others partook of without scruple: "one man esteemed one day above another," conscientiously observing the principal Jewish solemnities; "another esteemed every day alike." Among the Jewish converts, very different sentiments were entertained on the subject of circumcision, which all appear to have observed, though upon different principles; the more enlightened, like St. Paul, from a solicitude to avoid unnecessary

offence; the more superstitious, from persuasion of its intrinsic obligation; and some because they believed it impossible to be saved without it; by which they endangered, to say the least, the fundamental doctrine of justification by faith. Against the sentiment last mentioned, we find St. Paul protesting with vehemence, and affirming, with all the authority of his office, that "if any man was circumcised" with such views, Christ "profited him nothing;" but on no occasion proceeding to excommunication. The contention arising from the discussion of these points became so violent, that there appeared no method of terminating it, but to depute Paul and Barnabas to go up to Jerusalem, to consult the apostles, who, being solemnly convened on the occasion, issued the famous decree contained in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts, by which the liberty of the gospel was confirmed, and the domineering spirit of Jewish zealots repressed. Though the success of this measure was great, it was not complete; a contrariety of opinion and of practice prevailed in the church respecting Jewish ceremonies and observances, which considerably impaired its harmony. But instead of attempting to silence the remaining differences, by interposing his authority, St. Paul enjoins mutual toleration. "Him that is weak in faith receive ye, not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things; another who is weak eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise

him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not, judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? unto his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up; for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."*

To the same purpose are the following injunctions in the next chapter:—"We then that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Now the God of peace and consolation grant you to be like-minded one towards another, according to Jesus Christ, that ye may with one mind, and with one mouth, glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God."† It cannot be denied that the passages we have adduced contain an apostolic canon for the regulation of the conduct of such christians as agree in fundamentals, while they differ on points of subordinate importance: by this canon they are commanded to exercise a reciprocal toleration and indulgence, and on no account to proceed to an open rupture. In order to apply it to the question under consideration, it is only necessary to consider to what description of persons the rule extends. The persons we are commanded to receive are the *weak in faith*. From the context,

* Rom. xiv. 1—5. † Rom. xv. 1, 6, 7.

as well as from other parts of his epistles, it is certain that St. Paul means to designate by that appellation, sincere though erring christians; and in the instance then under contemplation, persons whose organs were not yet attempered to the blaze of gospel light and liberty, but who still clung to certain legal usages and distinctions, which more comprehensive views of revelation would have taught them to discard. The term *weak* is employed by the same writer in his epistle to the Corinthians, to denote an *erroneous* conscience, founded on a false persuasion of a certain power and efficacy attached to idols, of which they are really destitute. "For himself," he tells us, "he knew that an idol was nothing, but every one was not possessed of that knowledge; for some with conscience of the idol, with an interior conviction of its power, eat of the sacrifice, as a thing offered to an idol, and their conscience being *weak*, is defiled." In the chapter whence these words are quoted, the term *weak* occurs not less than five times, and in each instance is used as synonymous with *erroneous*. I have insisted the more on this particular, in order to obviate a misconception which may arise from the acknowledged ambiguity of the word *weak*, which might be supposed to intend not a mistaken or erring mind, but a mind not sufficiently confirmed in the truth to which it assents. The certainty of its comprehending the case of error being once admitted, it is not necessary to multiply words to evince its bearing on

the present controversy; all that remains to be considered is the *principle* on which toleration is enforced, which every impartial reader must perceive, is the assumption that the errors and mistakes to be tolerated are not *fundamental,* not of such a nature, in other words, as to prevent those who maintain them from being accepted with God. "Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth; *for God hath received him.*" What can this mean but that the error in question, to whichsoever side it be imputed, was of a description not to exclude its abettor from being an accepted servant of God, who, as he at present bears with his infirmity, is well able, whenever he pleases, to correct and remove it? He further proceeds to urge a spirit of forbearance from a consideration of the perfect integrity with which both parties maintained their respective opinions. Both were equally conscientious, and therefore neither deserved to be treated with severity. "Wherefore receive ye one another," he adds, "even as Christ has received you to the glory of the Father." When he thus commands christians to receive each other, and enforces that duty by the example of Christ, it surely requires little penetration to perceive that the practice enjoined ought to be commensurate to that example, and that this precept obliges us to receive all whom Christ has received. To interpret it otherwise, is to suppose the example irrelevant, and at once to

annihilate the principle on which the injunction is founded.

Having paved the way to the conclusion to which we would conduct the reader, we have only to remark, that in order to determine how far these apostolic injunctions oblige us to tolerate the supposed error of our pædobaptist brethren, we have merely to consider whether it necessarily exclude them from being of the number of those whom Christ has received, to the glory of the Father, whether it be possible to hold it with christian sincerity, and finally, whether its abettors will stand or fall in the eternal judgement.

If these questions are answered in the way which christian candour irresistibly suggests, and which the judgement of our opponents approves, they conclude in favour of the admission of pædobaptists to communion, not less forcibly than if they had been mentioned by name; and all attempts to evade them, must prove futile and abortive. If it be asserted, on the contrary, that a mistake on the subject of baptism is not comprehended in the above description, the passages adduced must be acknowledged irrelevant, and the whole controversy assumes a new aspect.

In the same spirit the apostle earnestly presses on the Philippians the obligation of maintaining an uninterrupted harmony, and of cultivating a fraternal affection to each other, even while he is contemplating the possibility of their entertaining different apprehensions respecting truth and duty.

After proposing himself as an example of the renunciation of legal hopes, and the serious study of perfection, he adds, "Let us, therefore, as many as are *perfect*, as many as have obtained correct and enlarged views of the gospel, be thus minded; and if in any thing we are otherwise minded, or rather *differently* minded, possessing different views and apprehensions on certain subjects, God will reveal even this unto you.* Nevertheless, wherein we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." Here the case of a diversity of sentiment arising among christians is distinctly assumed, and the proper remedy suggested, which is, not the exercise of a compulsory power, much less a separation of communion, but the ardent pursuit of christian piety, accompanied with a humble dependence on divine teaching, which it may reasonably be expected will in due time correct the errors and imperfections of sincere believers. The conduct to be maintained in the mean while, was a cordial cooperation in every branch of worship and of practice, with respect to which they were agreed, without attempting to effect a unanimity by force; and this is precisely the conduct which we contend should be maintained towards our pædobaptist brethren. If they can be repelled from the Lord's table, without violating both the letter and the spirit of the

* See an admirable criticism on this passage in Bishop Horsley's Sermons, where the word ἑτέρως, which is the key to the whole passage, is most happily elucidated.—Vol. ii. p. 358.

preceding and of similar admonitions, we are prepared, however reluctantly, to acquiesce in their exclusion; but if they cannot, it deserves the serious consideration of the advocates of that measure, how they can reconcile the palpable infringement of such precepts with the scrupulous adherence to the dictates of scripture, to which they make such loud pretensions.

It will surely not be denied that the precepts of the gospel are entitled to at least as much reverence as apostolical precedents, when it is remembered that the language of the former, as is befitting laws, is clear and determinate, while inferences deduced from the latter are frequently subject to debate; not to remark, that if we consider the spirit of scripture precedent, it will be found entirely in our favour.

When the abettors of exclusive communion are pressed with the conclusions resulting from the passages we have quoted, and others of a similar tendency, their usual answer is that the inspired writers make no mention of baptism on these occasions, and that no allusion is had to a diversity of opinion on the positive institutions of the gospel; which is perfectly true, and perfectly foreign to the purpose for which it is alleged; for the question at issue is not, What were the individual errors we are commanded to tolerate; but, What is the *ground* on which that measure is enforced, and whether it be sufficiently comprehensive to include the pædobaptists? That it is so, that they are

actually included, can only be denied by affirming that they are precluded from divine acceptance, since it is precisely on that ground that St. Paul rests the plea of toleration. To object to the application of a general principle to a particular case, that it is not the identical one which first occasioned its enunciation, is egregious trifling, and would go to the subversion of all general principles whatever, and consequently put an end to all reasoning. When a doubtful point in morality is to be decided by an appeal to a general principle, it is an essential property of such a principle to extend to more particulars than one; since, if it did not, it would cease to be a principle, and the point in question would be left to be decided by itself; and if not self-evident, could admit of no decision whatever. When Nadab and Abihu, intoxicated with wine, offered strange fire upon the altar, and were struck with instant death for their presumption, Moses by divine command prescribed the following general rule for the worship of God: "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh to me, and before all the people I will be glorified."* Who can be at a loss to perceive the absurdity of limiting that precept to the prohibition of intoxication, the crime which occasioned its first promulgation, instead of extending it to every instance of levity and impiety, in an approach to the divine Majesty? My consciousness of the extreme weight of prejudice which the truth has to encounter, to-

* Lev. x. 3.

gether with the inaptitude of many who are most interested in this controversy to ascend to first principles, is my only apology for insisting upon a point so obvious; choosing rather to hazard the contempt of the wise, than not to impress conviction on the vulgar.

With such as admit the possibility of pædobaptists being saved, there remains, in my apprehension, no alternative, but either to receive them into their communion without scruple, as comprehended within the apostolic canon, or to affirm that decision to be founded on erroneous grounds; which at once removes the controversy to a superior tribunal, where they and the apostle must implead each other. Let us, however, briefly examine certain distinctions they have recourse to, in order to elude the force of these passages. In the first place it has been alleged, that though we are commanded to *receive* our mistaken brethren, we are not instructed to receive them at the Lord's table, or into the external communion of the church; and that such injunctions are consequently irrelevant to the inquiry respecting the right of persons of a similar character to those external privileges of which they make no mention. "Is there no way," say our opponents, "of receiving him that is weak in faith, but by admitting him to the Lord's table? Must the exhortation to receive a christian brother be confined to that single instance of true benevolence?"* To this we reply, that we know of

* Booth's Apology, p. 101.

none who assert that the term *receive* must necessarily be limited to the single act of a reception at the Lord's table; but we affirm, without hesitation, that he is not *received* in the sense of the apostle, who is denied that privilege. Had the parties whom he addressed proceeded to an open rupture in point of communion, would they, in the judgement of our opponents, have complied with the purport and spirit of his injunction? And if, after adopting such a measure, they had appealed to the apostle, whether there "were no other way of receiving their brethren but by admitting them to the Lord's table," would he, or would he not, have considered himself as mocked and insulted? Mr. Booth enumerates many instances in St. Paul's epistles, in which he enjoins christians to *receive* certain persons, such as Phœbe, Onesimus, Epaphroditus, and himself, where an admission to the Lord's table was not intended, but something which he informs us would manifest their love in a much higher degree.* What a convincing demonstration of the propriety of withholding from persons of a similar character, that lower, that inferior token of esteem which is included in christian fellowship! And because the bare admission of all the persons mentioned to the external communion of the church, did not satisfy the ardent benevolence of the apostle, without more decided and discriminate marks of attachment, nor answer, in the opinion of our

* Booth's Apology, p. 102.

opponents, to the full import of the word *receive*, the true method of realizing his intentions, is to reject the modern Phœbe and Onesimus altogether.

"Supposing, however," says Mr. Booth, "that there were no way of receiving one that is weak in faith, but by admitting him to the Lord's table, this text would be far from proving that which our opponents desire; unless they could make it appear, that the persons of whom the apostle immediately speaks, were *not members* of the church of Rome, when he gave the advice."* If there be any weight in this argument, it must proceed from the supposition, that if the persons whom the apostle enjoins the Romans to receive, had not been already members, there is no sufficient ground for believing, notwithstanding the strain of his admonitions, that they would have been admitted. But is it possible to suppose that he would have recommended a class of persons so earnestly to the affectionate regards of a christian society whom he would not have previously deemed eligible to their communion; or that the primitive discipline was so soon relaxed as to occasion the continuance in the church of such as would have been originally deemed unworthy candidates? Most assuredly they who, upon valid grounds, would have been rejected if they had not already been members, were never permitted to boast the protection and patronage of an inspired apostle after they became

* Booth's Apology, p. 82.

such. In every well-ordered society, the privileges attached to it are forfeited by that conduct in its members, whatever it be, which would have been an effectual obstacle to their admission; and to suppose this maxim reversed in a christian church, and that an apostle would caress, protect, and commend persons who might justly have been debarred from entering, is an absurdity which few minds can digest. The necessity of recurring to such suppositions, is itself a sufficient confutation of the system they are brought to defend.

Our opponents still insist upon it, that no conclusion can be drawn from the command to receive the *weak in faith,* unless it could be shewn that they were *unbaptized.* But this mode of reasoning, pursued to its consequences, would annihilate all the general axioms of scripture,* and considering the infinite diversity of human circumstances, render them a most incompetent guide. If the Holy Spirit has been pleased to command us, without exception, to receive *the weak in faith,* and instructed us in the grounds on which his decision proceeded, which is plainly the acceptance of such with God; if the apostles, acting under his direction, governed the church on the same principles, and suffered no breach of communion

* "But admitting that to be a fact," says Mr. Booth, "of which there is not the least evidence, the conclusion drawn from the passage would not be just, except it were also proved, that the weak in faith were unbaptized, or at least so considered by their stronger brethren, for that is the point in dispute between us."—*Booth's Apology,* p. 104.

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to be effected, but on account of a vicious life, or fundamental error, the criminality attached to an opposite course of procedure will be very little extenuated by a circumstantial difference in its objects. Had those whom the apostles commanded their converts to tolerate, been *unbaptized*, the inference in favour of pædobaptists would unquestionably have been more obvious, but not more certain, because nothing can be more evident than that they urged the duty of toleration on a principle which, even in the judgement of our opponents, equally applies to the pædobaptists, which is, that the error in each case is compatible with a state of salvation, and may be held with an upright conscience.

However systems and opinions may fluctuate, truth is eternal; and if these were solid grounds of mutual forbearance and indulgence heretofore, they must still continue such; but if they were not, St. Paul must be acknowledged to have reasoned inconclusively, and all idea of plenary inspiration must be abandoned. As the case stands, the advocates of exclusive communion must either assert, in direct contradiction to his statement, that the compatibility of an error with a state of salvation, and with what comes nearly to the same point, the perfect sincerity of its abettor, is *not* a sufficient reason for its being tolerated in the church, or consign the pædobaptists, who die in their sentiments, to eternal destruction. In this dilemma, they are at liberty to adopt which

position they please, but from both it is impossible to escape.

In order, as it should seem, to perplex the mind of the reader on this part of the subject, our opponents endeavour to confound that interposition of mercy, by which impenitent sinners are introduced into a state of salvation, with the gracious acceptance of believers.*

With this view we are reminded that God receives such as are dead in sins. Whether it be safe to assert that God accepts the impenitent at all, while their impenitence continues, I shall not stay to inquire: it is certain they are not received in the *same sense* as genuine christians, nor in the sense the apostle intended when he enjoined forbearance towards the *weak in faith.* That Christ receives men *in their sins,* so as to adopt them into his family, and make them heirs of eternal life, is a doctrine offensive to pious ears, most

* "Yet permit me to ask," says Mr. Booth, "is the divine conduct, is the favour of God, or the kindness of Christ in receiving sinners, the rule of our proceeding in the administration of positive institutions? Whom does God, whom does Christ receive? None but those who believe and profess faith in the Lord Messiah? Our brethren will not affirm it. For if divine compassion did not extend to the dead in sin; if the kindness of Christ did not relieve the enemies of God, none of our fellow race would ever be saved. But does it hence follow that we must admit the unbelieving, or the unconverted, either to baptism or the holy supper? Our gracious Lord freely accepts all that desire it, and all that come, but are we bound to receive every one that solicits communion with us?"—*Booth's Apology,* p. 106.

remote from the language of scripture, and from all sober theology. But if they intend something essentially distinct from this, for what purpose it is introduced, except with a view to shelter themselves under the cover of an ambiguous term, I am at a loss to conjecture. In the mean time, it is obvious that the design of these contortions is to get rid, if possible, of a principle which originated not with us, but with St. Paul, that we ought to accept those whom we acknowledge Christ to have accepted. This is still more evident; when we find them adducing the excommunication of unworthy members, such as the incestuous man at Corinth, who it is asserted was all along an object of divine favour, as a proof that the rule which that inspired writer has laid down, may be safely neglected. In reply to which, it is sufficient to ask—In what light was the incestuous person regarded,* when he declared his determination to deliver him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. Was it under the character of a member of Christ, or an enemy to the gospel? If we believe his own representation, he deemed it necessary for him to be expelled as an infectious leaven, the continuance of which would corrupt the whole mass; so that

* "Besides, gospel churches," says Mr. Booth, "are sometimes obliged to exclude from their communion those whom he has received, as appears from the case of the incestuous person in the church of Corinth. And have those churches which practise free communion never excluded any for scandalous backslidings, whom, notwithstanding, they could not but consider as received of Christ?"—*Booth's Apology*, p. 106.

whatever proofs of repentance he might afterwards exhibit, these could have no influence on the principle on which he was excluded. When the professors of christianity are guilty of deliberate violation of the laws of Christ, they are to be treated agreeably to the conduct they exhibit, as bad men, with a hope that the severity of discipline may reclaim and restore them to the paths of rectitude.

To justify the practice of exclusive communion, by placing pædobaptists, who form the great body of the faithful, on the same level with men of impure and vicious lives, is equally repugnant to reason, and offensive to charity; at the same time that it is manifest from this mode of reasoning, that the measure contended for is considered in the light of *punishment*. Whether our pædobaptist brethren are the proper objects of it, or whether it is adapted to promote the only legitimate ends of punishment, must be left to future inquiry.

## Section III.

### *Pædobaptists a Part of the true Church, and their Exclusion, on that account, Unlawful.*

Before we proceed to urge the argument announced in this section, it will be necessary to ascertain the precise import of the word *church*, as it is employed in the Holy Scriptures. If we examine the New Testament, we shall find that

the term church, as a religious appellation, occurs in two senses only; it either denotes the whole body of the faithful, or some one assembly of christians associated for the worship of God. In the former sense, it is styled in the Apostles' Creed, catholic, or universal; a belief in the existence of which, forms one of its principal articles. In this sense, Jesus Christ is affirmed to be "Head over all things to the church, which is his body." It is in this collective view of it, that we affirm its perpetuity. When the term is employed to denote a particular assembly of christians, it is invariably accompanied with a specification of the place where it was accustomed to convene, as for example, the church at Corinth, at Ephesus, or at Rome. Now it is manifest from scripture, that these two significations of the word differ from each other only as a part differs from a whole, so that when the whole body of believers is intended, it is used in its absolute form; when a particular society is meant, it is joined with a local specification. It is never used in the New Testament, as in modern times, to denote the aggregate of christian assemblies throughout a province, or a kingdom; nor do we ever read of the church of Achaia, Galatia, &c. but of the churches in the plural number; the word being constantly applied either to the whole number of the faithful, scattered throughout the world, or to some single congregation or society. It is equally obvious that whenever the word church occurs in its absolute

form, it comprehends all genuine christians without exception, and as that church is affirmed to be *his body*, it could not enter into the conception of the inspired writers that there were a class of persons strictly united to Christ, who yet were none of its competent parts.

By orthodox christians it is uniformly maintained that union to Christ is formed by faith, and as the baptists are distinguished by demanding a profession of it at baptism, they at least are precluded from asserting that rite to have any concern in effecting the spiritual alliance in question. In their judgement at least, since faith precedes the application of water, the only means of union are possessed by the abettors of infant sprinkling equally with themselves; who are therefore equally of the "body of Christ, and members in particular." But since the Holy Ghost identifies that body with the church, explaining the one by the other, ("for his body's sake, which is the church,") it seems impossible to deny that they are fully entitled to be considered, in the catholic sense of the term, as members of the christian church. And as the universal church is nothing more than the collective body of the faithful, and differs only from a particular assembly of christians, as the whole from a part, it is equally impossible to deny that a pædobaptist society is, in the more limited import of the word, a true church.

If we consider the matter in a light somewhat different, we shall be conducted to the same

conclusion, and be compelled to confess that pædobaptist societies are, or at least may be, notwithstanding the practice of infant-sprinkling, true churches. The idea of plurality, it will be admitted, adds nothing to the nature of the object to which it is attached. The idea of a number of men differs nothing in kind, from that of a single man, except that it involves a repetition, or multiplication of the same idea. But the term church is merely a numerical term, denoting a multitude, or an assembly of men; and for the same reason that a number of men meeting together constitutes an assembly, or *church*,* in the most comprehensive import of the word, so a number of christians convened for the worship of God, constitutes a christian assembly, or a *church*. Such an assembly will necessarily be modified by the character of the members which compose it; if their sentiments are erroneous, the church will proportionably imbibe a tincture of error; but to affirm that though it consists of real christians, a society of such assembled for christian worship is not a true church, is to attribute to the idea of *plurality* or of *number* the power of changing the nature or essence of the object with which it is united, which involves a contradiction to our clearest perceptions. If we adhere to the dictates of reason or of scripture, when we give the appellation of a church to a particular society of christians, we shall mingle

* Acts xix. 32.—"For the assembly was confused." The original is ἡ ἐκκλησία, the term usually rendered *church*.

nothing in our conceptions, beyond what enters into our ideas of an individual christian, with the exception of this circumstance only, that it denotes a number of such individuals actually assembled, or wont to assemble for the celebration of divine worship. Though the definition of a church has often been the occasion of much confused disquisition, especially when the term has been applied exclusively to the clergy, the baptists, I believe, are the only persons who have scrupled to assign that appellation to societies acknowledged to consist of sincere and spiritual worshippers: a notion which, however repugnant to the dictates of candour, or of common sense, is the necessary appendage of the practice, equally absurd, of confining their communion to their own denomination.

Having shewn, we trust to the satisfaction of the reader, that pædobaptism is not an error of such magnitude, as to prevent the society which maintains it from being deemed a true church, I proceed to observe that to repel the members of such a society from communion, is the very essence of schism. Schism is a causeless and unnecessary separation from the church of Christ, or from any part of it; and that secession cannot urge the plea of necessity, where no concurrence in what is deemed evil, no approbation of error or superstition, is involved in communion. In the case before us, by admitting a pædobaptist to the Lord's supper, no sanction whatever is given to infant-sprinkling, no act of concurrence is involved or

implied; nothing is done, or left undone, which would have not been equally so, if his attendance were withdrawn. Under such circumstances, the necessity of preserving the purity of worship, or of avoiding an active cooperation in what we deem sinful or erroneous, (the only justifiable ground of separation,) has no place. The objection to his admission is founded solely on a disapprobation of a particular practice, considered, not as it affects us, since no part of our religious practice is influenced by it, but in relation to its intrinsic demerits.

Division amongst christians, especially when it proceeds to a breach of communion, is so fraught with scandal, and so utterly repugnant to the genius of the gospel, that the suffrages of the whole christian world have concurred in regarding it as an evil, on no occasion to be incurred, but for the avoidance of a greater—the violation of conscience. Whenever it becomes impossible to continue in a religious community, without concurring in practices, and sanctioning abuses, which the word of God condemns, a secession is justified by the apocalyptic voice, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."* On this principle, the conduct of the reformers in separating from the Roman hierarchy, admits of an ample vindication: in consequence of the introduction of superstitious rites and ceremonies, it became impracticable to continue in her com-

* Rev. xviii. 4.

munion, without partaking of her sins; and for a similar reason the nonconformists seceded from the church of England, where ceremonies were enforced, and an ecclesiastical polity established, incompatible, as they conceived, with the purity and simplicity of the christian institute. In each of these cases, the blame of schism did not attach to the separatists, but to that spirit of imposition which rendered separation requisite. In each instance, it was an act of self-preservation, rendered unavoidable by the highest necessity, that of declining to concur in practices at which their conscience revolted. But what similarity to this is discernible in the conduct of the advocates of strict communion? They are not engaged in preserving their own liberty, but in an attack on the liberty of others: their object is not to preserve the worship in which they join, pure from contamination; but to sit in judgement on the consciences of their brethren, and to deny them the privileges of the visible church on account of a difference of opinion, which is neither imposed on themselves, nor deemed fundamental. They propose to build a church, upon the principle of an absolute exclusion of a multitude of societies, which they must either acknowledge to be true churches, or be convicted, as we have seen, of the greatest absurdity; while, for a conduct so monstrous and unnatural, they are precluded from the plea of necessity, because no attempt is made by pædobaptists to modify their

worship, or to control the most enlarged exercise of private judgement. Upon the principle for which I am contending, they are not called to renounce their peculiar tenets on the subject of baptism, nor to express their approbation of a contrary practice; but simply not to sever themselves from the body of Christ, nor refuse to unite with his church.

However familiar the spectacle of christian societies who have no fellowship or intercourse with each other has become, he who consults the New Testament will instantly perceive, that nothing more repugnant to the dictates of inspiration, or to the practice of the first and purest ages, can be conceived. When we turn our eyes to the primitive times, we behold one church of Christ, and one only, in which when new assemblies of christians arose, they were considered not as multiplying, but diffusing it; not as destroying its unity, or impairing its harmony, but being fitly compacted together on the same foundation, as a mere accession to the beauty and grandeur of the whole. The spouse of Christ, like a prolific mother, exulted in her numerous offspring, who were all equally cherished in her bosom, and grew up at her side. As the necessity of departing from these maxims, or of appearing to depart from them at least, by forming separate societies, arose entirely from that spirit of ecclesiastical tyranny and superstition which was gradually developed, so a similar measure is justifiable as far

as that necessity extends, and no farther. In the case of strict communion, it has no place whatever. In that case, it is not a defensive, but an offensive measure; it is not an assertion of christian liberty, by resisting encroachment,—it is itself a violent encroachment on the freedom of others; not an effort to preserve our own worship pure, but to enforce a conformity to our views, in a point acknowledged not essential to salvation. That the unity of the church cannot be maintained upon those principles, that if every error is to be opposed, not by mild remonstrance, and scriptural argument, but by making it the pretext of a breach of communion, nothing but a series of animosities and divisions can ensue, the experience of past ages has rendered sufficiently evident. If amidst the infinite diversity of opinions, each society deems it necessary to render its own peculiarities the basis of union, as though the design of christians in forming themselves into a church, were not to exhibit the great principles of the gospel, but to give publicity and effect to party distinctions, all hope of restoring christian harmony and unanimity must be abandoned. When churches are thus constituted, instead of enlarging the sphere of christian charity, they become so many hostile confederacies.

If it be once admitted that a body of men associating for christian worship have a right to enact as terms of communion, something more than is included in the terms of salvation, the question

suggested by St. Paul—"Is Christ divided?"* is utterly futile: what he considered as a solecism is reduced to practice, and established by law. How is it possible to attain or preserve unanimity in the absence of an intelligible standard? and when we feel ourselves at liberty to depart from a divine precedent, and to affect a greater nicety and scrupulosity in the separation of the precious and the vile, than the Searcher of hearts; when we follow the guidance of private partialities and predilections, without pretending to regulate our conduct by the pattern of our great Master; who can be at a loss to perceive the absolute impossibility of preserving "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace?" Of what is essential to salvation, it is not difficult to judge; the quiet of the conscience requires that the information on this subject should be clear and precise: whatever is beyond, is involved in comparative obscurity, and subject to doubtful disputation.

There are certain propositions which produce on a mind free from prejudice such instantaneous conviction, as scarcely to admit of formal proof. Of this nature is the following position, that it is presumptuous to aspire to a greater purity and strictness in selecting the materials of a church, than are observed by its Divine Founder; and that those whom he forms and actuates by his Spirit, and admits to communion with himself, are sufficiently qualified for the communion of mortals. What can be alleged in contradiction to a truth

* 1 Cor. i. 13.

so indubitable and so obvious? Nothing but a futile distinction (futile in relation to the present subject) betwixt the moral, and the positive parts, of christianity. We are told, again and again, that the Lord's supper is a positive and arbitrary institution, in consequence of which, the right to it is not to be judged of by moral considerations and general reasonings, but by express prescription and command.

Willing to meet objectors on their own ground, we request them to point us to the passage in the code of inspiration, where unbaptized christians are forbidden to participate; and all the answer we receive, consists merely of those inferences and arguments from analogy, against which they protest; so that our opponents, unsupported by the letter of scripture, are obliged to have recourse to general reasoning, not less than ourselves, however lame and defective that reasoning may be.

When we urge upon them the fact that all genuine christians are received by Christ, and that his conduct in this instance is proposed as a pattern for our imitation, they are compelled to shift their ground; and although it is evident, to every one who reflects, that we mean to assert the obligation of adhering to that example, only as far as it is known, they adduce the instance of immoral professors, who, though received, as they contend, by Christ, are justly rejected by the church. But how, we ask, are we to ascertain the fact that such persons are accepted of Christ, till they give

proof of their repentance? Is it precisely the same thing to neglect a known rule of action, as to cease to follow it, when it is involved in hopeless obscurity? Admitting, for argument's sake, that they who live disorderly have uninterrupted union with the Saviour, it is impossible that we should know it, while they continue impenitent, and therefore, on such occasions, it ceases to be a rule. But in rejecting pædobaptists in the mass, they reject a numerous class of christians whom they know and acknowledge to be the temples of the Holy Ghost. If the two cases are parallel, we acknowledge the justice of the conclusion; if not, what more futile and absurd? Let it be remembered, however, that all this quibbling and tergiversation are employed to get rid of an apostolic canon, and that they bear upon our principles in no other sense than as they tend to nullify or impair the force of an inspired maxim. If we are in error, we deem it no small felicity to err in such company.

Before I close this section, I must be permitted to remark an inconsistency in the conduct of our opponents, connected with this part of the subject, which has often excited my surprise. Disclaiming, as they do, all communion with pædobaptists, and refusing to acknowledge them as a legitimate part of the christian church, we should naturally expect they would shun every approach to such a recognition of them with peculiar care in devotional exercises, in solemn addresses to the Deity. Nothing, on the contrary, is more common than the

interchange of religious services betwixt baptists and independents, in which the pædobaptist minister is solemnly commended to the Supreme Being as the pastor of the church, and his blessing earnestly implored on the relation they stand in to each other; nor is it unusual for a baptist to officiate at the ordination of an independent minister, by delivering a charge, or inculcating the duties of the people, in a discourse appropriated to the occasion. They feel no objection to have communion with pædobaptists in prayer and praise, the most solemn of all acts of worship, even on an occasion immediately connected with the recognition of a religious society; but no sooner does the idea of the eucharist occur, than it operates like a spell, and all this language is changed, and these sentiments vanish. It is surely amusing to behold a person solemnly inculcating the reciprocal duties of a relation, which, on his principles, has no existence; and interceding expressly in behalf of a pastor and a church, when, if we credit his representations at other times, that church is illegitimate, and the title of pastor consequently a mere usurpation. Although it must be acknowledged that the approach of pædobaptists to the sacred table is, on their principles, a presumptuous intrusion, it is seldom that the advocates of strict communion feel any scruple in attempting, by devotional exercises, to prepare the mind for the right performance of what they are accustomed to stigmatise as radically wrong. For my part,

I am utterly at a loss to reconcile these discrepancies. Is it that they consider less attention to truth, a less exact correspondence betwixt the language and the sentiments, requisite in addressing the Deity than in discoursing with their fellow mortals? Or is it not more candid to suppose that devotion elevates them to a higher region, where they breathe the freer air, and look down upon the petty subtleties of a thorny, disputatious theology, with a just and sovereign contempt?

## Section IV.

### *The Exclusion of Pædobaptists from the Lord's Table considered as a Punishment.*

The refusal of the eucharist to a professor of christianity can be justified only on the ground of his supposed criminality; of his embracing heretical sentiments, or living a vicious life. As the sentence of exclusion is the severest the church can inflict, and as no punishment is just, but in proportion to the degree of preceding delinquency, it follows of course that he who incurs the total privation of church-privileges, must be considered eminently in the light of an offender. When the incestuous person was separated from the church at Corinth, it was regarded by St. Paul as a *punishment,* and that of no ordinary magnitude:— "Sufficient," said he, "is this punishment, which

was inflicted of many." Nor is there any difference, with respect to the present inquiry, betwixt the refusal of a candidate, and the expulsion of a member; since nothing will justify the former of these measures, which might not be equally alleged in vindication of the latter. Both amount to a declaration of the parties being unworthy to communicate. The language held by our opponents is sufficiently decisive on this head:—"It is not every one," says Mr. Booth, "that is received of Jesus Christ, who is entitled to communion at his table; but such, and such only, as revere his authority, submit to his ordinances, and obey the laws of his house."* Hence, to be consistent with themselves, they must impute to pædobaptists universally, a degree of delinquency equal to that which attaches to the most flagrant breaches of morality; and deem them equally guilty, in the sight of God, with those unjust persons, idolaters, revellers, and extortioners, who are declared incapable of entering into the kingdom of heaven. For, if the guilt imputed in this instance, is acknowledged to be of a totally different order from that which belongs to the openly vicious and profane, how come they to be included in the same sentence? and where is the equity of animadverting upon unequal faults with equal severity?

To be consistent, also, they must invariably refuse to tolerate every species of imperfection in their members, which in their judgement is equally

* Apology, p. 107.

criminal with the pædobaptist error; but how far they are from maintaining this impartiality, is too obvious to admit of a question. In churches whose discipline is the most rigid, it will not be denied that many are tolerated, who are chargeable with conduct more offensive in the sight of God than a misconception of the nature of a positive institute; nor will they assert that a Brainerd, a Doddridge, or a Leighton, had more to answer for at the supreme tribunal, on the score of infant baptism, than the most doubtful of those imperfect christians, whom they retain without scruple in their communion. Let them remember, too, that this reasoning proceeds, not on the principle of the innocence of error in general, or of infant-sprinkling in particular; but, on the contrary, that it takes for granted, that some degree of blame attaches to a neglect, though involuntary, of a positive precept; we wish only to be informed, on what principle of equity it is proposed, in the infliction of ecclesiastical censures, to equalize things which are not equal.

From those injunctions of St. Paul which have already been distinctly noticed, where he enforces the duty of reciprocal toleration, we find him insisting on certain circumstances, adapted to diminish the moral estimate of the errors in question, and to shew that they involved a very inconsiderable portion of blame, compared to that which the zealots, on either side, were disposed to impute. Such is the statement of their not being

fundamental, of the possibility of their being held with a pure conscience, and the certainty that both parties were equally comprehended within the terms of salvation. In thus attempting to form an estimate of the magnitude of the mistakes and misconceptions of our fellow-christians, in a moral view, for the purpose of regulating our treatment of them, we are justified by the highest authority; and the only rational inquiry seems to be, whether infant baptism is really more criminal than those acknowledged imperfections which are allowed to be proper objects of christian forbearance. If it be affirmed that it is, we request our opponents to reconcile this assertion with the high encomiums they are wont to bestow on pædobaptists, many of whom they feel no hesitation in classing, on other occasions, with the most eminent saints upon earth. That they are perfectly exempt from blame, we are not contending; but this strange combination of vice and virtue in the same persons, by which they are, at once, justly excluded from the church as *criminal*, and extolled as saints, is perfectly incomprehensible. The advocates of this doctrine attempt to conceal its deformity, by employing an attenuated and ambiguous phraseology, and instead of speaking of pædobaptists in the terms their system demands, are fond of applying the epithets irregular, disorderly, &c., to their conduct. Still the question returns—Is this imputed irregularity innocent or criminal? If the former, why punish it at all? If the latter, surely

the punishment should be proportioned to the guilt; and if it exceed the measure awarded to offences equally aggravated, we must either pronounce it unjust, or confound the distinction of right and wrong. But if the forfeiture of all the privileges attached to christian society, is incurred merely by infant baptism, while numerous imperfections, both in sentiment and practice, are tolerated in the same church, it cannot be denied that the former is treated with more severity than the latter. If it be more criminal, such treatment is just; but if a Doddridge and a Leighton were not, even in the judgement of our opponents, necessarily more criminal in the sight of God than the most imperfect of those whom they retain in their communion, it is neither just in itself, nor upon their own principles.

If we consider the matter in another light, the measure under consideration will appear equally incapable of vindication. As it is unquestionably of the nature of *punishment*, so the infliction of every species of punishment is out of place, which has no tendency to reform the offender, or to benefit others by his example, which are its only legitimate ends. Whatever is beside these purposes, is a useless waste of suffering, equally condemned by the dictates of reason and religion. The application of this principle to the case before us, is extremely obvious.

I am far from thinking lightly of the spiritual power with which Christ has armed his church.

It is a high and mysterious one, which has no parallel on earth. Nothing in the order of means is equally adapted to awaken compunction in the guilty, with spiritual censures impartially administered. The sentence of excommunication, in particular, harmonizing with the dictates of conscience, and re-echoed by her voice, is truly terrible; it is the voice of God, speaking through its legitimate organ, which he who despises or neglects, ranks with "heathen men and publicans," joins the synagogue of Satan, and takes his lot with an unbelieving world, doomed to perdition. Excommunication is a sword which, strong in its apparent weakness, and the sharper and more efficacious for being divested of all sensible and exterior envelopements, lights immediately on the spirit, and inflicts a wound which no balm can cure, no ointment can mollify, but which must continue to ulcerate and burn, till it is healed by the blood of atonement, applied by penitence and prayer. In no instance is that axiom more fully verified, "The weakness of God is stronger than men, and the foolishness of God is wiser than men," than in the discipline of his church. By incumbering it with foreign aid, they have robbed it of its real strength; by calling in the aid of temporal pains and penalties, they have removed it from the spirit to the flesh, from its contact with eternity to unite it to secular interests; and, as the corruption of the best things is the worst, have rendered it the scandal and reproach of our holy religion.

While it retains its character, as a spiritual ordinance, it is the chief bulwark against the disorders which threaten to overturn religion, the very nerve of virtue, and, next to the preaching of the cross, the principal antidote to the "corruptions that are in the world through lust." Discipline in a church occupies the place of laws in a state; and as a kingdom, however excellent its constitution, will inevitably sink into a state of extreme wretchedness, in which laws are either not enacted, or not duly administered; so a church, which pays no attention to discipline, will either fall into confusion, or into a state so much worse, that little or nothing will remain worth regulating. The right of inflicting censures, and of proceeding in extreme cases to excommunication, is an essential branch of that power with which the church is endowed, and bears the same relation to discipline that the administration of criminal justice bears to the general principles of government. When this right is exerted in upholding the "faith once delivered to the saints," or enforcing a conscientious regard to the laws of Christ, it maintains its proper place, and is highly beneficial. Its cognizance of doctrine is justified by apostolic authority; "a heretic, after two or three admonitions, reject:" nor is it to any purpose to urge the difference betwixt ancient heretics and modern, or that to pretend to distinguish truth from error is a practical assumption of infallibility. While the truth of the gospel remains, a fundamental

contradiction to it is possible; and the difficulty of determining what is so, must be exactly proportioned to the difficulty of ascertaining the import of revelation, which he who affirms to be insurmountable, ascribes to it such an obscurity as must defeat its primary purpose.

He who contends that no agreement in doctrine is essential to communion, must, if he understands himself, either mean to assert that christianity contains no fundamental truths, or that it is not necessary that a member of a church should be a christian. The first of these positions sets aside the necessity of faith altogether; the last is a contradiction in terms. For these reasons, it is required that the operation of discipline should extend to speculative errors, no less than to practical enormities. But since it is not pretended that pædobaptists are heretics, it is evident that they are not subject to the cognizance of the church, under that character. As they differ from us merely in the interpretation of a particular precept, while they avow the same deference to the legislator, the proper antidote to their error is calm, dispassionate argument, not the exercise of power. Let us present the evidence on which our practice is grounded, to the greatest advantage, to which the display of a conciliating spirit will contribute more than a little: but to proceed with a high hand, and attempt to terminate the dispute by authority, involves an utter misconception of the true nature and object of discipline, which is

never to decide what is doubtful, to elucidate what is obscure, but to promulgate the sentence which the immutable laws of Christ have provided, with the design, in the first place, of exciting compunction in the breast of the offender, and next of profiting others by his example. The solemn decision of a christian assembly, that an individual has forfeited his right to spiritual privileges, and is henceforth consigned to the kingdom of Satan, is an awful proceeding, only inferior in terror to the sentence of the last day.

But what is it which renders it so formidable? It is its accordance with the moral nature of man, its harmony with the dictates of conscience, which gives it all its force. When, on the contrary, the pious inquirer is satisfied with his own conduct, viewing it with approbation and complacency; when he is fortified, as in the present instance, by the example of a great majority of the christian world, who are ready to receive him with open arms, and to applaud him for the very practice which has provoked it, how vain is it to expect that his exclusion from a particular church will operate a change! When he learns, too, that his supposed error is not pretended to be fatal, but such as may be held with a good conscience, and with faith unfeigned, and is actually held by some of the best of men, it is easy to foresee what sentiments he will feel towards the authors of such a measure, and how little he will be prepared to examine impartially the evidence of that particular

opinion which has occasioned it. Such a proceeding, not having the remotest tendency to inform, or to alarm the conscience, is ineffectual to every purpose of discipline; and as it professedly comprises nothing of the nature of argument, no light can be derived from it, towards the elucidation of a controverted question. It interposes by authority, instead of reason, where authority can avail nothing, and reason is all in all: and while it is contemptible as an instrument employed to compel unanimity, its power of exciting prejudice and disgust is unrivalled. Such are the mischiefs resulting from confounding together the provinces of discipline and of argument; and since the practice which we have ventured to oppose, if it have any meaning, is intended to operate as a punishment, without answering one of the ends for which it is inflicted, it is high time it were consigned to oblivion.

There is another consideration, sufficiently related to the part of the subject before us to justify my introducing it here, as I would wish to avoid the unnecessary multiplication of divisions. Whatever criminality attaches to the practice of free communion, must entirely consist in *sanctioning* the improper conduct of the parties with whom we unite; and if it be wrong to join with pædobaptists at the Lord's table, it must be still more so in them to celebrate it. When an action allowed in itself to be innocent or commendable, becomes improper, as performed in conjunction with another,

that impropriety must result solely from the moral incompetence, to that action, of the party associated. Thus in the instance before us, it must be assumed that pædobaptists are *morally culpable* in approaching the sacred symbols, or the attempt to criminate us for *sanctioning* them in that practice would be ridiculous. As it is allowed that every baptized believer not only may partake, but ought to partake, of that spiritual repast, his uniting with pædobaptists on that occasion, is liable to objection on no other ground than that it may be considered as intimating his approbation of *their* conduct in that particular. Upon the principles of our opponents, their approach is not only sinful, but sinful to such a degree as to communicate a moral taint to what, in other circumstances, would be deemed an act of obedience. Here the first question that arises is,—Are the advocates of infant baptism criminal in approaching the Lord's table?

Be it remembered, that our controversy with them respects the ordinance of baptism only, which we suppose them to have misconceived, and that it has no relation to the only remaining positive institute. Believing, as many of them unquestionably do, that they are as truly baptized as ourselves, and there being no controversy betwixt us on the subject of the eucharist, it is impossible for them, even on the principles of our opponents, to entertain the least scruple respecting the obligation of attending to that ordinance. Admitting it possible for them to believe what they uniformly

and invariably profess, they cannot fail of being fully convinced that it is their duty to communicate. Under these circumstances, ought they to communicate, or ought they not? If we answer in the negative, we must affirm that men ought not to pursue that course which, after the most mature deliberation, the unhesitating dictates of conscience suggest; which would go to obliterate and annul the only immediate rule of human action. Nor can it be objected with truth, that the tendency of this reasoning is to destroy the absolute difference betwixt right and wrong, by referring all to conscience. That, apart from human judgements, there is an intrinsic moral difference in actions, we freely admit, and hence results the previous obligation of informing the mind, by a diligent attention to the dictates of reason and religion, and of delaying to act till we have sufficient light; but in entire consistence with this, we affirm that, where there is no hesitation, the criterion of *immediate* duty is the suggestion of conscience, whatever guilt may have been previously incurred, by the neglect of serious and impartial inquiry. That this, under the modifications already specified, is the only criterion, is sufficiently evident from the impossibility of conceiving any other. If it lead (as it easily may, from the neglect of the previous inquiry already mentioned) to a deviation from absolute rectitude, we must not concur in the action in which such deviation is involved.

To apply these principles to the case before us. Whatever blame we may be disposed to attribute to the abettors of infant baptism, on the score of previous inattention, or prejudice; as there is nothing in their principles to cause them to hesitate respecting the obligation of the eucharist, it is unquestionably their *immediate* duty to celebrate it, they would be guilty of a deliberate and wilful offence were they to neglect it. And as it is *their* duty to act thus, in compliance with the dictates of conscience, we cannot be guilty of sanctioning what is evil in them, by the approbation implied in joint participation. As far as *they* are concerned, the case seems clear; and no sanction is given to criminal conduct. It remains to be considered only how the action is situated with respect to ourselves; and here the decision is still more easy, for the action to which we are invited is not only consistent with rectitude, but would be allowed by all parties to be an instance of obedience, but for the concurrence of pædobaptists. Thus much may suffice in answer to the first question, respecting the supposed criminality of the act of communion as performed by the advocates of infant baptism: a criminality which must be assumed as the sole basis of the charges adduced against the practice we are defending.

When we reflect that the whole of our opponents' reasoning turns upon the disqualification of pædobaptists for the Lord's supper, it is surprising that we rarely, if ever, find them contemplate the

subject in that light, or advert to the criminality of breaking down that sacred inclosure. The subordinate agents are severely censured, the principal offenders scarcely noticed; and, if my reader be disposed to gratify his curiosity by making a collection of all the uncandid strictures which have been passed upon the advocates of pædobaptism, it is more than probable the charge of profaning the Lord's supper would not be found among the number. Yet this is the *original* sin; this the epidemic evil, as widely diffused as the existence of pædobaptist communities: and if it be of such a nature as to attach a portion of guilt to whatever comes into contact with it, it must, considering its extensive prevalence, be one of the most crying enormities. It is an evil which has spread much wider than the sacrifice of the mass: it is a pollution which (with the exception of one sect only) attaches to all flesh, and is unblushingly avowed by the professors of christianity in every part of the universe. And, what is most surprising, the only persons who have discovered it, instead of lifting up their voice, maintain a profound silence; and, while they are sufficiently liberal in their censures on the popular error respecting baptism, are not heard to breathe a murmur against this erroneous abuse. In truth they are so little impressed with it, that they decline urging it, even where the mention of it would seem unavoidable. When they are rebuking us for joining with our pædobaptist brethren in partaking of a sacrament

for which they are supposed to want the due qualifications, it is not *their* presumption in approaching, on which they insist, as might be reasonably expected; on that subject they are silent, while they vehemently inveigh against the imaginary countenance we afford to the neglect of baptism. Thus they persist in construing our conduct, not into an approval of that act of communion in which we are engaged, but into a tacit submission of the validity of infant baptism, against which we are known to remonstrate. In short, they are disposed to attack our practice in any point, rather than in that in which, if we are wrong, it is alone vulnerable, that of its being an expression of our approbation of pædobaptists celebrating the eucharist. In the same spirit, when they have once procured the exclusion of the obnoxious party from their assemblies, they are completely satisfied; their communion elsewhere gives them no concern, though it must be allowed, on the supposition of the pretended disqualification, that the evil remains in its full force. Nor are they ever known to remonstrate with them on this irregularity during its continuance; nor, should they afterwards become converts to our doctrine, to recall it to their attention, with a view to excite compunction and remorse; so that this is perhaps the only sin for which men are never called to repentance, and of which no man has been known to repent. When our Lord dismissed the woman taken in adultery, though he did not proceed to

judge her, he solemnly charged her to *sin no more:* the advocates for strict communion, when they dismiss pædobaptists, give them no such charge; their language seems to be,—"Go, sin by yourselves, and we are satisfied."

The inference I would deduce from these remarkable facts is, that they possess an internal conviction that the class of christians whom they proscribe, would be guilty of a great impropriety in declining to communicate in the sacramental elements; and that the union of baptists with them in that solemnity, so far from being liable to the imputation of "partaking in other men's sins," is not only lawful, but commendable.

## Section V.

### *On the Impossibility of reducing the Practice of Strict Communion to any general Principle.*

When a particular branch of conduct is so circumstanced as to be incapable of being deduced from some general rule, or of being resolved into some comprehensive principle, founded on reason or revelation, we may be perfectly assured it is not obligatory. Whatever is matter of duty, is a part of some *whole,* the relation of which is susceptible of proof, either by the express decision of scripture, or by general reasoning; and a point of practice perfectly insulated, and disjointed from

the general system of duties, whatever support it may derive from prejudice, custom, or caprice, can never be satisfactorily vindicated. From want of attention to this axiom, both the world and the church have, in different periods, been overrun with innumerable forms of superstition and folly; to which the only effectual antidote is, an appeal to principles. Unless I am much mistaken, the question under discussion will afford a striking exemplification of the justness of this remark. If it be found impossible to fix a medium betwixt the toleration of all opinions in religion, and the restriction of it to errors *not fundamental,* the practice of exclusive communion must be abandoned, because it is neither more nor less than an attempt to establish such a medium. By errors *not fundamental,* I mean such as are admitted to consist with a state of grace and salvation; such as are not supposed to prevent their abettors from being accepted of God. With such as contend for the indiscriminate admission of all doctrines on the one hand, or with the abettors of rigid uniformity, who allow no latitude of sentiment on the other, we have no concern; since we concur with our opponents in deprecating both these extremes; and while we are tenacious of the "truth as it is in Jesus," we both admit that some indulgence to the mistakes and imperfections of the truly pious is due, from a regard to the dictates of inspiration, and the nature of man. The only subject of controversy is, how far that forbearance

is to be extended: we assert, to every diversity of judgement, not incompatible with salvation; they contend that a difference of opinion on baptism is an excepted case. If the word of God had clearly and unequivocally made this exception, we should feel ourselves bound to admit it, upon the same principle on which we maintain the infallible certainty of revelation; but when we press for this decision, and request to be directed to the part of scripture which for ever prohibits unbaptized persons from approaching the sacrament, in the same manner as the Jews were prohibited from celebrating the passover, who had not submitted to circumcision, we meet with no reply but precarious inferences and general reasoning.

However plausible their mode of arguing may appear, the impartial reader will easily perceive it fails in the main point, which is, to establish that *specific difference* betwixt the case they except out of their list of tolerated errors, and those which they admit, which shall justify this opposite treatment. Thus, when they ask whether God has not "commanded baptism; whether it is not the believer's duty to be found in it;"* it is manifest that the same reasons might be urged against bearing with any imperfection in our fellow-christian whatever; for which of these, we ask, is not inconsistent with some command, and a violation, in a greater or less degree, of some duty? with this difference, indeed, that many of the imperfections

* Booth's Apology, p. 128.

which christian churches are necessitated to bear with, are seated in the will, while the case before us involves merely an unintentional mistake. "It is not every one," says Mr. Booth, "that is received of Jesus Christ, who is entitled to communion at his table; but such, and only such, as revere his authority, submit to his ordinances, and obey the laws of his house." This is the most formal attempt which that writer has made to specify the difference betwixt the case of the abettors of infant baptism, and others; for which reason the reader will excuse my directing his attention to it for a few moments. We are indebted to him, in the first place, for a new discovery in theology. We should not have suspected, but for his assertion, that there could be a description of persons whom Christ has received, who neither revere his authority, submit to his ordinances, nor obey his laws. How Mr. Booth acquired this information we know not; but certainly in our Saviour's time it was otherwise. "Then are ye my disciples," said he, "if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you." I congratulate the public on the prudence evinced by the venerable author, in not publishing the names of these highly privileged individuals, who have proved their title to heaven, to his satisfaction, without reverence, submission, or obedience; wishing his example had been imitated, in this particular, by the authors of the wonderful conversions of malefactors, many of whom, I fear, belong to this new sect.

This singular description, however, I scarcely need remind the reader, is designed to characterize baptists in opposition to pædobaptists; and were it not the production of a man whom I highly revere, I should comment upon it with the severity it deserves. Suffice it to remark, that to mistake the meaning of a statute is one thing, not to reverence the legislator, another; that he cannot submit with a good conscience to an ordinance, who is not apprised of its existence; and that a blind obedience, even to divine laws, would be far from constituting a reasonable service. Every conscientious adherent to infant baptism reveres the authority of Christ not less than a baptist, and is distinguished by a spirit of submission and obedience to every known part of his will; and as this is all to which a baptist can pretend, and far more than many who, without scruple, are tolerated in our churches, can boast, we are as far as ever from ascertaining the *specific difference* betwixt the case of the pædobaptist, and other instances of error supposed to be entitled to indulgence. In spite of Mr. Booth's marvellous definition, reverence, submission, and obedience, are such essential features in the character of a christian, that he who was judged to be destitute of them in their substance and reality would instantly forfeit that character; while to possess them in perfection is among the brightest acquisitions of eternity. It should be remembered, too, that the general principles of morality are not less

the laws of Christ than positive rites, and, if we credit prophets and apostles, much to be preferred in comparison; so that it must be acknowledged that he who is deficient in attention to these, while he is more exemplary in discharging the former than a baptized christian, (a very frequent case,) stands higher in the scale of obedience. So equivocal is the line of separation here attempted.

When the necessity of tolerating imperfection is once admitted, there remains no point at which it can consistently stop, till it is extended to every gradation of error, the habitual maintenance of which is compatible with a state of salvation. The reason is, that it is absolutely impossible to define that *species* of error which is so situated as not to preclude its possessor from divine acceptance, although it forfeits his title to the full exercise of christian charity. The baptists who contend for confining the Lord's supper to themselves, imagine they have found such an error in the practice of initiating infants into the christian church. But it is observable that they can reduce it to no *class*, nor define it by any *general idea;* and when we urge them, with the apostolic injunction, to bear with each other's infirmities, they have nothing to reply, but merely that St. Paul is not speaking of baptism, which is true, because one thing is not another; but it behoves them to shew that the principle he establishes does not *include* this case, and here they are silent.

If we impartially examine the reasons on which

we rest the toleration of any supposed error, we shall find they invariably coincide with the idea of its *not being fundamental.* If it be alleged, for example, that the error in question relates to a subject less clearly revealed than some others, what is this but to insinuate the ease with which an honest inquirer may mistake respecting it? If the little practical influence it is likely to exert, is alleged as a plea for forbearance, the force of such a remark rests entirely on the assumption of an indissoluble connexion betwixt a state of salvation and a certain character, which the opinion in question is supposed not to destroy. If we allege the example of eminently pious men, who have embraced it, we infer from analogy the actual safety of the person by whom it is held; and, in short, it is impossible to construct an argument for the exercise of mutual forbearance, but what proceeds upon this principle; a principle which pervades the reasoning of our opponents on every other occasion, except this of strict communion, which they make an insulated case, capriciously exempting it from the arbitration of all the general rules of scripture, as well as from the maxims to which, in all other instances, they are attached.

Reluctant as I feel to trespass on the patience of the reader, by unnecessarily prolonging the discussion, I am anxious, if possible, to set the present argument in a still stronger light. I observe, therefore, that if it be contended that a

certain opinion is so obnoxious as to justify the exclusion of its abettors from the privilege of christian fellowship, it must be either on account of its involving a contradiction to the saving truth of the gospel, or on account of its injurious effects on the character. As those of our brethren to whom this reasoning is addressed, positively disclaim considering infant baptism in the former light, they will not attempt to vindicate the exclusion of pædobaptists on that ground. In vindication of such a measure, they must allege the injurious effects it produces on the character of its abettors. Here, however, they have precluded themselves from the possibility of urging that the injury sustained is *fatal*, by the previous concession that it does not involve a contradiction to saving truth. Could they, without cancelling that concession, urge the *fatal* nature of the influence in question, they would present an object to the mind sufficiently precise and determinate; an object which may be easily conceived, and accurately defined. But, as things are now situated, they can, at most, only insist on such a kind and degree of deteriorating effect as is consistent with the spiritual safety of the party concerned; and as they are among the first to contend that every species of error is productive of injurious effects, it is incumbent upon them to point out some consequences worse in their kind, or more aggravated in degree, resulting from this particular *error*, than what may be fairly ascribed to the

worst of those erroneous or defective views, which they are accustomed to tolerate. These injurious consequences must also occupy an intermediate place between two extremes; they must, on the one hand, be decidedly more serious than can be supposed to result from the most crude, undigested, or discordant views, tolerated in regular baptist churches, yet not of such a nature, on the other, as to involve the danger of eternal perdition. Let them specify, if it be in their power, that ill influence on the character which is the natural consequence of the tenet of infant sprinkling, considered *per se*, or independent of adventitious circumstances, and the operation of accidental causes, which justifies a treatment of its patrons, so different from what is given to the abettors of other errors. This malignant influence must, I repeat it, be the natural or necessary product of the practice of pædobaptism; because the simple avowal of this is deemed sufficient to incur the forfeiture of church privileges, without further time or inquiry. However vehemently the supporters of such a measure may declaim against it, or however triumphantly expose the principles on which it is founded, they have done nothing towards accomplishing their object—the vindication of strict communion, since the same mode of proceeding might be adopted towards any other misconception or erroneous opinion; and if it may be forcibly expelled, as soon as it is confuted, there is an end to toleration. Toleration

has no place but in the presence of acknowledged imperfection. It is absolutely necessary for them, as they would vindicate their conduct to the satisfaction of reasonable men, to prove that some specific deteriorating effect results from the practice of infant baptism, distinct from the malignant influence of error in general, and of those imperfections, in particular, which are not inconsistent with salvation.

Though the opposition betwixt truth and error is equal in all cases, and the former always susceptible of proof as well as the latter of confutation, all error is not opposed to the *same* truths; and hence arises a distinction betwixt such erroneous and imperfect views of religion as, however they may, in their remoter consequences, impair, do not contradict, the gospel testimony, and such as do. We lay this distinction as the basis of that forbearance towards the mistakes and imperfections of good men for which we plead; and, as the case of our pædobaptist brethren is clearly comprehended within that distinction, feel no scruple in admitting them to christian fellowship. We are attached to that distinction because it is both scriptural and intelligible; while the hypothesis of the strict baptists, as they style themselves, is so replete with perplexity and confusion, that, for my part, I absolutely despair of comprehending it. It proceeds upon the supposition of a certain medium between two extremes, which they have not even attempted to fix; and as the

necessary consequence of this, their reasoning, if we choose to term it such, floats and undulates in such a manner, that it is extremely difficult to grasp it. On the pernicious influence of error in general we entertain no doubt, but we demand, again and again, to have that precise injurious effect of infant sprinkling pointed out and evinced, which is more to be deprecated than the probable result of those acknowledged imperfections to which they extend their indulgence. This must surely be deemed a reasonable requisition, though it is one with which they have not hitherto thought fit to comply.

The operation of speculative error on the mind is one of the profoundest secrets in nature; and to determine the precise quantity of evil resulting from it in any given case, (except the single one of its involving a denial of fundamental truth,) transcends the capacity of human nature. We must, in order to form a correct judgement, be not only perfectly acquainted with the nature and tendency of the error in question, but also with the portion of attention it occupies, as well as the degree of zeal and attachment with which it is embraced. We must determine the force of the counteracting principles, and how far it bears an affinity to the predominant failings of him who maintains it; how far it coalesces with the weaker parts of his moral constitution. These particulars, however, it is next to impossible to explore, when the inquiry respects ourselves; how much more

to establish a scale which shall mark, by just gradations, the malignant influence of erroneous conceptions on others! On the supposition of a formal denial of saving, essential, truth, we feel no difficulty; we may determine, without hesitation, on the testimony of God, that it incurs a forfeiture of the blessings of the new and everlasting covenant, among which the communion of saints holds a distinguished place. But such a supposition is foreign to the present inquiry.

Instead of losing ourselves in a labyrinth of metaphysical subtleties, our only safe guide is an appeal to facts; and here we find, from experience, that the sentiments of the pædobaptist may consist with the highest attainments of piety exhibited in modern times; with the most varied and elevated forms of moral grandeur, without impairing the zeal of missionaries, without impeding the march of confessors to their prisons, or of martyrs to the flames. We are willing to acknowledge these tenets have produced much mischief in communities and nations, who have confounded baptism with regeneration; but the mere belief of the title of infants to that ordinance, is a misconception respecting a positive institute, much less injurious than if it affected the vital parts of christianity. But, be it what it may, we contend that it is impossible, without a total disregard of truth and decency, to assert, that it is *intrinsically* and *essentially* more pernicious in its effects than the numerous errors and

imperfections which the advocates of strict communion feel no scruple in tolerating in the best organized churches. It is but justice to add, that few or none have attempted to prove that it is so; but have satisfied themselves with a certain vague and loose declamation, better adapted to inflame prejudice, than to produce light or conviction.

In the government of the church, there is a choice of three modes of procedure, each consistent with itself, though not equally compatible with the dictates of reason or scripture. We may either open the doors to persons of all sentiments and persuasions who maintain the messiahship of Christ; or insist upon an absolute uniformity of belief; or limit the necessity of agreement to articles deemed fundamental, leaving subordinate points to the exercise of private judgement. The strict baptists have feigned to themselves a fourth, of which it is not less difficult to form a clear and consistent conception, than of a fourth dimension. They have pursued the clew by which other inquirers have been conducted, till they arrived at a certain point, when they refused to proceed a step farther, without being able to assign a single reason for stopping, which would not equally prove they had already proceeded too far. They have attempted an incongruous mixture of liberal principles with a particular act of intolerance; and these, like the iron and clay in the feet of Nebuchadnezzar's image, will not mix. Hence all that

want of coherence and system in their mode of reasoning, which might be expected in a defence not of a theory, so properly, as of a capricious sally of prejudice.

Before I close this part of the subject, I must just remark the sensible chagrin which the venerable Booth betrays at our insisting on the distinction betwixt fundamentals and non-fundamentals in religion, and the singular manner in which he attempts to evade its force. After observing that we are wont, in defence of our practice, to plead that the points at issue are not fundamental— "Not fundamental!" he indignantly exclaims, "not essential! But in what sense is submission to baptism not essential? To our justifying righteousness, our acceptance with God, or our interest in his favour? So is the Lord's supper, and so is *every part of our obedience.* They (the friends of open communion) will readily allow that an interest in the divine favour is not obtained by miserable sinners, but granted by the eternal Sovereign: and that acceptance with the High and Holy God is not on conditions performed by us, but in consideration of the vicarious obedience, and propitiatory sufferings of the great Emanuel."

"To the pure, all things are pure." In the mind of Mr. Booth, nothing was associated with this language, I am persuaded, but impressions of piety and devotion; though its unguarded texture and ambiguous tendency are too manifest. For

my own part, I am at a loss to put any other construction upon it than this; either that faith and repentance are in no respect conditions of salvation, or that adult baptism is of equal necessity and importance. When it is asked—What is essential to salvation? the gospel constitution is presupposed, the great facts in christianity assumed; and the true import of the inquiry is—What is essential to a personal interest in the blessings secured by the former, in the felicity of which the latter are the basis? in which light, to reply—The atonement and righteousness of Christ, is egregious trifling, because being things *out of ourselves*, though the only preliminary basis of human hope, it is absurd to confound them with the characteristic difference betwixt such as are saved, and such as perish. When, in like manner, an inquiry arises—What is fundamental in religion? as we must be supposed by religion to intend a system of doctrines to be believed, and of duties to be performed, to direct us to the vicarious obedience of Christ, not as a necessary object of belief, but as a transaction absolute and complete in itself, and to pass over in silence the inherent distinction of character, the faith with its renovating influence to which the promise of life is attached, is, to speak in the mildest terms, to reply in a manner quite irrelevant; and when to this is joined, even by implication, a denial of the existence of such a distinction, we are conducted to the brink of a precipice. The denial of this is

the very core of antinomianism, to which it is painful to see so able a writer, and so excellent a man as Mr. Booth, make the slightest approach. We would seriously ask whether it be intended to deny that the belief of any doctrines, or the infusion of any principles or dispositions whatever, is essential to future happiness; if this be intended, it supersedes the use and necessity of every branch of internal religion. If it is not, we ask, Are correct views on the subject of baptism to be classed among those doctrines?

Had we been contending for an indulgence towards such as are convinced of the obligation of believers' baptism, but refuse to act up to their convictions, and shrink from the cross, some parts of the expostulation we have quoted might be considered as pertinent; but to attempt to explain away a distinction, the most important in theology, the only centre of harmony, the only basis of peace and concord, and the grand bulwark opposed to the sophistry of the church of Rome, is a humiliating instance of the temerity and imprudence incident to the best of men. The Jesuit Twiss, in that controversy with the protestants which gave occasion to the inimitable defence of their principles by the immortal Chillingworth, betrayed the same impatience with our author at this distinction, though in perfect consistence with the doctrines of a church which pretends, by an appeal to an infallible tribunal, to decide every controversy, and to preclude every doubt.

Nothing but an absolute despair of giving a satisfactory reply to the arguments drawn from this quarter, could have tempted Mr. Booth to quarrel with a distinction so justly dear to all protestants; and it is no small presumption of the justness of our sentiments, that the attempt to refute them is found to require that subversion of the most received axioms in theology, together with the strange paradox, that while much more than we suppose is necessary to communion, nothing is essential to salvation. In consideration, however, of the embarrassment of our opponents, we feel it easy to overlook the effusions of their discontent; but as it is not usual to consult the enemy on the choice of weapons, we shall continue to employ such as we find most efficacious, though they may not be the most pleasant to the touch.

## Section VI.

### *The Impolicy of the Practice of Strict Communion considered.*

In the affairs of religion and morality, where a divine authority is interposed, the first and chief attention is due to its dictates, which we are not permitted to violate in the least instance, though we proposed, by such violation, to promote the interests of religion itself. She scorns to be

indebted, even for conquest, to a foreign force: "the weapons of her warfare are not carnal." We have, on this account, carefully abstained from urging the imprudence of the measure we have ventured to propose, from an apprehension that we might be suspected of attempting to bias the suffrage of our readers, by considerations and motives disproportioned to the majesty of revealed truth. But having, as I trust, sufficiently shewn that the practice of strict communion derives no support from that quarter, the way is open for the introduction of a few remarks on the natural tendency and effect of the two opposite systems. I would just premise that I hope no offence will be given to pædobaptists, by denominating their sentiments on the subject of baptism *erroneous*, as though it were expected that our assertion should be accepted for proof. It is designed as a simple statement of my opinion, and is assumed as the basis of my reasoning with my stricter brethren.

Truth and error, as they are essentially opposite in their nature, so the causes to which they are indebted for their perpetuity and triumph, are not less so. Whatever retards a spirit of inquiry, is favourable to error; whatever promotes it, to truth. But nothing, it will be acknowledged, has a greater tendency to obstruct the exercise of free inquiry, than the spirit and feeling of a party. Let a doctrine, however erroneous, become a party distinction, and it is at once intrenched in interests and attachments which make it extremely difficult

for the most powerful artillery of reason to dislodge it. It becomes a point of honour in the leaders of such parties, which is from thence communicated to their followers, to defend and support their respective peculiarities to the last; and, as a natural consequence, to shut their ears against all the pleas and remonstrances by which they are assailed. Even the wisest and best of men are seldom aware how much they are susceptible of this sort of influence; and while the offer of a world would be insufficient to engage them to recant a known truth, or to subscribe an acknowledged error, they are often retained in a willing captivity to prejudices and opinions which have no other support, and which, if they could lose sight of party feelings, they would almost instantly abandon. To what other cause can we ascribe the attachment of Fenelon and of Pascal, men of exalted genius and undoubted piety, to the doctrine of transubstantiation, and other innumerable absurdities of the church of Rome? It is this alone which has ensured a sort of immortality to those hideous productions of the human mind, the shapeless abortions of night and darkness, which reason, left to itself, would have crushed in the moment of their birth.

It is observable that scientific truths make their way in the world with much more ease and rapidity than religious. No sooner is a philosophical opinion promulgated, than it undergoes at first a severe and rigorous scrutiny; and if it is found

to coincide with the results of experiment, it is speedily adopted, and quietly takes its place among the improvements of the age. Every acquisition of this kind is considered as a common property; as an accession to the general stores of mental opulence. Thus the knowledge of nature, the further it advances from its head, not only enlarges its channel by the accession of tributary streams, but gradually purifies itself from the mixture of error. If we search for the reason of the facility with which scientific improvements established themselves in preference to religious, we shall find it in the absence of combination, in there being no class of men closely united who have an interest, real or imaginary, in obstructing their progress. We hear, it is true, of parties in the republic of letters; but if such language is not to be considered as entirely allusive and metaphorical, the ties which unite them are so slight and feeble, compared to those which attach to religious societies, as scarcely to deserve the name. The spirit of party was much more sensibly felt in the ancient schools of philosophy than in the modern, on account of philosophical inquiries embracing a class of subjects which are now considered as no longer belonging to its province. Before revelation appeared, whatever is most deeply interesting in the contemplation of God, of man, or of a future state, fell under the cognizance of philosophy; and hence it was cultivated with no inconsiderable portion of that moral

sensibility, that solicitude and alternation of hope and fear, respecting an invisible state, which are now absorbed by the gospel. From that time the departments of theology and philosophy have become totally distinct, and the genius of the former free and unfettered.

In religious inquiries, few feel themselves at liberty to follow without restraint, the light of evidence, and the guidance of truth, in consequence of some previous engagement with a party; and, though the attachment to it might originally be purely voluntary, and still continues such, the natural love of consistency, the fear of shame, together with other motives sufficiently obvious, powerfully contribute to perpetuate and confirm it. When an attachment to the fundamental truths of religion is the basis of the alliance, the steadiness, constancy, and perseverance it produces, are of the utmost advantage; and hence we admire the wisdom of Christ in employing and consecrating the social nature of man in the formation of a church. It is utterly impossible to calculate the benefits of the publicity and support which christianity derives from that source; nor will it be doubted that the intrepidity evinced in confessing the most obnoxious truths, and enduring all the indignities and sufferings which result from their promulgation, is, in a great measure, to be ascribed to the same cause. The concentration of the wills and efforts of christians rendered the church a powerful antagonist to the world. But

when the christian profession became split and divided into separate communities, each of which along with certain fundamental truths, retained a portion of error, its reformation became difficult just in proportion to the strength of these combinations. Religious parties imply a tacit compact not merely to sustain the fundamental truths of revelation, (which was the original design of the constitution of a church,) but also to uphold the incidental peculiarities by which they are distinguished. They are so many ramparts or fortifications, erected in order to give a security and support to certain systems of doctrine and discipline, beyond what they derive from their native force and evidence.

The difficulty of reforming the corruptions of christianity is great, in a state of things where the fear of being eclipsed, and the anxiety in each denomination to extend itself as much as possible, engage, in spite of the personal piety of its members, all the solicitude and ardour which are not immediately devoted to the most essential truths; where correct conceptions on subordinate subjects are scarcely aimed at, but the particular views which the party has adopted, are either objects of indolent acquiescence, or zealous attachment. In such a state, opinions are no otherwise regarded, than as they affect the interest of a party; whatever conduces to augment its members, or its credit, must be supported at all events; whatever is of a contrary tendency, discountenanced and

suppressed. How often do we find much zeal expended in the defence of sentiments, recommended neither by their evidence nor their importance, which, could their incorporation with an established creed be forgotten, would be quietly consigned to oblivion. Thus the waters of life, instead of that unobstructed circulation which would diffuse health, fertility, and beauty, are diverted from their channels, and drawn into pools and reservoirs, where, from their stagnant state, they acquire feculence and pollution.

The inference we would deduce from these facts is, that if we wish to revive an exploded truth, or to restore an obsolete practice, it is of the greatest moment to present it to the public in a manner least likely to produce the collision of party. But this is equivalent to saying, in other words, that it ought not to be made the basis of a sect; for the prejudices of party are always reciprocal, and in no instance is that great law of motion more applicable, that "re-action is always equal to action, and contrary thereto." While it is maintained as a private opinion, by which I mean one not characteristic of a sect, it stands upon its proper merits, mingles with facility in different societies, and in proportion to its evidence, and the attention it excites, insinuates itself like leaven, till the whole is leavened.

Such, it should seem, was the conduct of the baptists before the time of Luther. It appears from the testimony of ecclesiastical historians, that

their sentiments prevailed to a considerable extent among the Waldenses and Albigenses, the precursors of the Reformation, to whom the crime of anabaptism is frequently ascribed amongst other heresies: it is probable, however, that it did not prevail universally; nor is there the smallest trace to be discovered of its being made a term of communion. When the same opinions on this subject were publicly revived in the sixteenth century, under the most unfavourable auspices, and allied with turbulence, anarchy, and blood, no wonder they met with an unwelcome reception, and that, contemplated through such a medium, they incurred the reprobation of the wise and good. Whether the English baptists held at first any part of the wild and seditious sentiments of the German fanatics, it is difficult to say: supposing they did, (of which I am not aware there is the smallest evidence,) it is certain they soon abandoned them, and adopted the same system of religion with other nonconformists, except on the article of baptism. But it is much to be lamented that they continued to insist on that article as a term of communion, by which they excited the resentment of other denominations, and facilitated the means of confounding them with the German anabaptists, with whom they possessed nothing in common besides an opinion on one particular rite. One feature of resemblance, however, joined to an identity of name, was sufficient to surmount, in the public feeling, the impression of all the points of

discrepancy or of contrast, and to subject them to a portion of the infamy attached to the ferocious insurgents of Munster. From that period, the success of the baptist sentiments became identified with the growth of a sect, which, rising under the most unfavourable auspices, was entirely destitute of the resources of worldly influence, and the means of popular attraction; and an opinion which, by its native simplicity and evidence, is entitled to command the suffrages of the world, was pent up and confined within the narrow precincts of a party, where it laboured under an insupportable weight of prejudice. It was seldom examined by an impartial appeal to the sacred oracles, or regarded in any other light than as the whimsical appendage of a sect, who disgraced themselves at the outset by the most criminal excesses, and were at no subsequent period sufficiently distinguished by talents or numbers to command general attention.

Nothing is more common than for zeal to overshoot its mark. If a determined enemy of the baptists had been consulted on the most effectual method of rendering their principles unpopular, there is little doubt but that he would have recommended the very measures we have pursued: the first and most obvious effect of which has been to generate an inconceivable mass of prejudice in other denominations. To proclaim to the world our determination to treat as "heathen men and publicans," all who are not immediately prepared to concur with our views of baptism, what is it

less than the language of hostility and defiance; admirably adapted to discredit the party which exhibits, and the principles which have occasioned such a conduct? By thus investing these principles with an importance which does not belong to them, by making them co-extensive with the existence of a church, they have indisposed men to listen to the evidence by which they are supported; and attempting to establish by authority the unanimity which should be the fruit of conviction, have deprived themselves of the most effectual means of producing it. To say that such a mode of proceeding is not adapted to convince, that refusing pædobaptists the right of communion has no tendency to produce a change of views, is to employ most inadequate language: it has a powerful tendency to the contrary; it can scarcely fail to produce impressions most unfavourable to the system with which it is connected, impressions which the gentlest minds find it difficult to distinguish from the effects of insult and degradation.

It is not, however, merely by this sort of reaction, that prejudice is excited unfavourable to the extension of our principles; but by the instinctive feelings of self-defence. Upon the system of strict communion, the moment a member of a pædobaptist church becomes convinced of the invalidity of his infant baptism, he must deem it obligatory upon him to relinquish his station, and dissolve his connexion with the church; and as superiority of ministerial talents and character is

a mere matter of preference, but duty a matter of necessity, he must at all events connect himself with a baptist congregation, whatever sacrifice it may cost him, and whatever loss he may incur. Though his pastor should possess the profundity and unction of an Edwards, or the eloquence of a Spencer, he must quit him for the most superficial declaimer, rather than be guilty of spiritual fornication. How is it possible for principles fraught with such a corollary, not to be contemplated with anxiety by our pædobaptist brethren, who, however they might be disposed to exercise candour towards our sentiments, considered in themselves, cannot fail to perceive the most disorganizing tendency in this their usual appendage. Viewed in such a connexion, their prevalence is a blow at the very root of pædobaptist societies, since, the moment we succeed in making a convert, we disqualify him for continuing a member. We deposit a seed of alienation and discord, which threatens their dissolution, so that we need not be surprised if other denominations should be tempted to compare us to the Euphratean horsemen in the Apocalypse, who are described as "having tails like scorpions, and with them they did hurt."

To these causes we must undoubtedly impute the superior degree of prejudice displayed by that class of christians, to whom we make the nearest approach, compared to such as are separated from us by a wider interval. A disposition to fair and liberal concession on the points at issue, is almost

confined to the members of established churches; and while the most celebrated episcopal divines, both popish and protestant, as well as those of the Scotch church, feel no hesitation in acknowledging the import of the word baptize is to *immerse*, that such was the primitive mode of baptism, and that the right of infants to that ordinance is rather to be sustained on the ground of ancient usage than the authority of scripture, our dissenting brethren are displeased with these concessions, deny there is any proof that immersion was ever used in primitive times, and speak of the extension of baptism to infants with as much confidence as though it were amongst the plainest and most undeniable dictates of revelation.*

* Campbell, speaking of the authors of the vulgar version, observes,—"Some words they have transferred from the original into their language; others they have translated. But it would not be always easy to find their reason for making this difference. Thus the word περιτομὴ they have translated *circumcisio*, which exactly corresponds in etymology; but the word βάπτισμα they have retained, changing only the letters from Greek to Roman. Yet the latter was just as susceptible of a literal version into Latin as the former. *Immersio*, *tinctio*, answers as exactly in one case, as *circumcisio* in the other." A little after he observes, —"I should think the word immersion (which though of Latin origin, is an English noun, regularly formed from the word to *immerse*) a better English name than baptism, were we now at liberty to make a choice: but we are not."—*Preliminary Dissertations to the Translation of the Gospels*, pp. 354, 355. 4to Ed. ——He elsewhere mentions it as one of the strongest instances of prejudice, that he has known some persons of piety who have denied that the word baptize signifies to immerse.

With respect to the *subject*, it is worthy of observation that the authors of the celebrated scheme of Popish doctrine and

To such a height has this animosity been carried, that there are not wanting persons who seem anxious to revive the recollection of Munster, and by republishing the narrative of the enormities perpetrated there, under the title of the History of the Baptists, to implicate us in the infamy and guilt of those transactions. While we must reprobate such a spirit, we are compelled to acknowledge that the practice of exclusive communion is admirably adapted to excite it, in minds of a certain order.

That practice is not less objectionable on another ground. By discouraging pædobaptists from frequenting our assemblies, it militates against the most effectual means of diffusing the sentiments which we consider most consonant to the sacred oracles. It cannot be expected that pious worshippers will attend, except from absolute necessity, where they are detained, if we may so speak,

discipline called the *Interim*, enumerate the baptism of infants among *traditions*, and that in the most emphatic manner. For, having stated that the church has two rules of faith, scripture and tradition, they observe, after treating of the first, " *ecclesia habet quoque traditiones, inter alia baptismus parvulorum*," &c. They mention, however, no other; from whence it is natural to infer that they considered this as the strongest instance of that species of rules. The total silence of scripture has induced not a few of the most illustrious scholars to consider infant baptism not of divine right; amongst whom, were we disposed to boast of great names, we might mention Salmasius, Suicer, and above all, Sir Isaac Newton, who, if we may believe the honest Whiston, frequently declared to him his conviction that the baptists were the only christians who had not symbolised with the church of Rome.—See *Whiston's Memoirs of his own Life*.

in the court of the Gentiles, and denied access to the interior privileges of the sanctuary.

The congregations, accordingly, where this practice prevails, are almost entirely composed of persons of our own persuasion, who are so far from requiring an additional stimulus, that it is much oftener necessary to restrain than to excite their ardour; while the only description of persons who could be possibly benefited by instruction are out of its reach; compelled by this intolerant practice to join societies, where they will hear nothing but what is adapted to confirm them in their ancient prejudices. Thus an impassable barrier is erected betwixt the baptists and other denominations, in consequence of which, few opportunities are afforded of trying the effect of calm and serious argumentation, in situations where alone it could prove effectual. In those baptist churches in which an opposite plan has been adopted, the attendance of such as are not of our sentiments, meeting with no discouragement, is often extensive; baptists and pædobaptists, by participating in the same privileges, become closely united in the ties of friendship; of which the effect is uniformly found to be a perpetual increase in the number of the former, compared to the latter, till, in some societies, the opposite sentiments have nearly subsided and disappeared.

Nor is this more than might be expected from the nature of things, supposing us to have truth on our side. For admitting this to be the case,

what can give permanence to the sentiments to which we are opposed, except a recumbent indolence, or an active prejudice? And is it not evident that the practice of exclusive communion has the strongest tendency to foster both those evils, the former by withdrawing, I might say repelling, the erroneous from the best means of instruction, the latter by the apparent harshness and severity of such a proceeding? It is not by keeping at a distance from mankind that we must expect to acquire an ascendency over them, but by approaching, by conciliating them, and securing a passage to their understanding through the medium of their hearts. Truth will glide into the mind through the channel of the affections, which, were it to approach in the naked majesty of evidence, would meet with a certain repulse.

Betraying a total ignorance or forgetfulness of these indubitable facts, what is the conduct of our opponents? They assume a menacing aspect, proclaim themselves the only true church, and assert that they alone are entitled to the christian sacraments. None are alarmed at this language, none are induced to submit; but turning, with a smile or a frown, to gentler leaders, they leave us to triumph without a combat, and to dispute without an opponent.

If we consider the way in which men are led to form just conclusions on the principal subjects of controversy, we shall not often find that it is the fruit of an independent effort of mind, determined

to search for truth in her most hidden recesses, and discover her under every disguise. The number of such elevated spirits is small; and though evidence is the only source of rational conviction, a variety of favourable circumstances usually contributes to bring it into contact with the mind, such as frequent intercourse, a favourable disposition towards the party which maintains it, habits of deference and respect, and gratitude for benefits received. The practice of confining the communion to our own denomination, seems studiously contrived to preclude us from these advantages, and to transfer them to the opposite side.

The policy of intolerance is exactly proportioned to the capacity of inspiring fear. The church of Rome for many ages practised it, with infinite advantage, because she possessed ample means of intimidation. Her pride grew with her success, her intolerance with her pride; and she did not aspire to the lofty pretension of being the only *true church*, till she saw monarchs at her feet, and held kingdoms in chains; till she was flushed with victory, giddy with her elevation, and drunk with the blood of saints. But what was policy in her, would be the height of infatuation in us, who are neither entitled by our situation, nor by our crimes, to aspire to this guilty preeminence. I am fully persuaded that few of our brethren have duly reflected on the strong resemblance which subsists betwixt the pretensions of the church of Rome, and the principles

implied in strict communion; both equally intolerant; the one armed with pains and penalties, the other, I trust, disdaining such aid; the one the intolerance of power, the other of weakness.

From a full conviction that our views as a denomination correspond with the dictates of scripture, it is impossible for me to entertain a doubt of their ultimate prevalence; but, unless we retrace our steps, and cultivate a cordial union with our fellow-christians, I greatly question whether their success will, in any degree, be ascribable to our own efforts. It is much more probable that the light will arise in another quarter, from persons by whom we are unknown, but who, in consequence of an unction from the Holy One, are led to examine the scripture with perfect impartiality, and, in the ardour of their pursuit after truth, alike to overlook the misconduct of those who have opposed, and of those who have maintained it.

Happily, the final triumph of truth is not dependant on human modes of exhibition. Man is the recipient, not the author of it; it partakes of the nature of the Deity; it is his offspring, its indissoluble relation to whom is a surer pledge of its perpetuity and support than finite power or policy. While we are at a certainty respecting the final issue, "the times and the seasons God hath put in his own power;" nor are we ever more liable to err, than when, in surveying the purposes of God, we descend from the elevation of general views, to a minute specification of times and instruments.

How long the ordinance of baptism, in its purity and simplicity, may be doomed to neglect, it is not for us to conjecture; but of this we are fully persuaded, it will never be generally restored to the church through the medium of a party. This mode of procedure has been already sufficiently tried, and is found utterly ineffectual.

The labour bestowed upon these sheets has not arisen from an indifference to the interests of truth, but from a sincere wish to promote them, by disengaging it from the unnatural confinement in which it has been detained by the injudicious conduct of its advocates. How far the reasoning adduced, or the spirit displayed on this subject, is entitled to approbation, must be left to the judgement of the religious public. If any offence has been given by the appearance of unbecoming severity, it will give me real concern; and the more so, because there are not a few amongst our professed opponents in this controversy, to whom I look up with undissembled esteem and veneration.

Having omitted nothing which appeared essentially connected with the subject, I hasten to close this disquisition; previously to which, it may not be improper briefly to recall the attention to the principal topics of argument. We have endeavoured to shew that the practice of strict communion derives no support from the supposed priority of baptism to the Lord's supper in the order of institution, which order is exactly the

reverse ; that it is not countenanced by the tenour of the apostles' commission, nor by apostolic precedent, the spirit of which is in our favour, proceeding on principles totally dissimilar to the case under discussion ; that the opposite practice is enforced by the obligations of christian charity ; that it is indubitably comprehended within the canon which enjoins forbearance towards mistaken brethren ; that the system of our opponents *unchurches* every pædobaptist community ; that it rests on no general principle ; that it attempts to establish an impossible medium ; that it inflicts a punishment which is capricious and unjust ; and finally, that, by fomenting prejudice, and precluding the most effectual means of conviction, it defeats its own purpose.

Should the reasoning under any one of these heads be found to be conclusive, however it may fail in others, it will go far towards establishing our leading position, that no church has a right to establish *terms of communion, which are not terms of salvation.* With high consideration of the talents of many of my brethren who differ from me, I have yet no apprehension that the sum total of the argument admits a satisfactory reply.

A tender consideration of human imperfection is not merely the dictate of revelation, but the law of nature, exemplified in the most striking manner, in the conduct of Him whom we all profess to follow. How wide the interval which separated his religious knowledge and attainments

from that of his disciples; he, the fountain of illumination, they encompassed with infirmities! But did he recede from them on that account? No: he drew the bond of union closer, imparted successive streams of effulgence, till he incorporated his spirit with theirs, and elevated them into a nearer resemblance of himself. In imitating by our conduct towards our mistaken brethren this great exemplar, we cannot err. By walking together with them, as far as we are agreed, our agreement will extend, our differences lessen, and love, which rejoiceth in the truth, will gradually open our hearts to higher and nobler inspirations.

Might we indulge a hope that not only our denomination, but every other description of christians, would act upon these principles, we should hail the dawn of a brighter day, and consider it as a nearer approach to the ultimate triumph of the church than the annals of time have yet recorded. In the accomplishment of our Saviour's prayer, we should behold a demonstration of the divinity of his mission, which the most impious could not resist; we should behold in the church a peaceful haven, inviting us to retire from the tossings and perils of this unquiet ocean, to a sacred inclosure, a sequestered spot, which the storms and tempests of the world were not permitted to invade.

"Intus aquæ dulces, vivoque sedilia saxo:
Nympharum domus. Hic fessas non vincula naves
Ulla tenent: unco non adligat anchora morsu."—*Virgil.*

The genius of the gospel, let it once for all be remembered, is not ceremonial, but spiritual, consisting, not in meats or drinks, or outward observances, but, in the cultivation of such interior graces, as compose the essence of virtue, perfect the character, and purify the heart. These form the soul of religion; all the rest are but her terrestrial attire, which she will lay aside when she passes the threshold of eternity. When, therefore, the obligations of humility and love come into competition with a punctual observance of external rites, the genius of religion will easily determine to which we should incline: but when the question is not whether we shall attend to them ourselves, but whether we shall enforce them on others, the answer is still more ready. All attempts to urge men forward, even in the right path, beyond the measure of their light, are impracticable in our situation, if they were lawful; and unlawful, if they were practicable. Augment their light, conciliate their affections, and they will follow of their own accord.

# POSTSCRIPT.

An objection to the hypothesis which assigns the origin of *christian* baptism to the commission which the apostles received at our Lord's resurrection, may possibly be urged from the baptisms performed by his disciples during his personal ministry; and, as no notice is taken of that circumstance in the body of the work, I beg leave to submit the following observations to the reader:— We are informed by one of the evangelists, that Christ, by the instrumentality of his disciples, at one period "made and baptized more disciples than John."* The following remarks may possibly cast some light on this subject:—

1. A divine commission was given to the son of Zechariah, to announce the speedy manifestation of the Messiah; or, which is equivalent, to declare that "the kingdom of God was at hand," with an injunction solemnly to immerse in water, as many as, in consequence of that intelligence, professed repentance and reformation of life; and as he was the only person who had been known

* John iv. 1.

to initiate his disciples by that rite, it was natural for him to be distinguished by the appellation of the Baptist, or the Immerser. The Scriptures are totally silent respecting any mission to baptize apart from his. It is by no means certain, however, that he was the only person who performed that ceremony; indeed, when we consider the prodigious multitudes who flocked to him, the "inhabitants of Jerusalem, Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan," it seems scarcely practicable; he most probably employed coadjutors; though, the practice having originated with him, it was foreign to the purpose of the evangelists to notice that circumstance.

2. Our Lord, who had already evinced the profoundest respect to his mission, by receiving baptism at his hands, was, in consequence of his being the Messiah, undoubtedly authorised personally to perform any religious rite or office which was at that time in force, as well as to delegate to others the power of performing it; and as immersion, in token of repentance and preparation for the kingdom of God, then at hand, was an important branch of the religion then obligatory, it was with the greatest propriety, that he not only submitted to it himself, but authorised his disciples to perform it. This, however, is by no means sufficient to constitute a distinct rite or ordinance; and since it was not accompanied with a distinct signification, it could not be considered as originating a new constitution, but as a mere

cooperation with his forerunner in one and the same work.

3. We have already shewn at large that the principal difference betwixt John's baptism, and that which the apostles were commissioned to perform after our Saviour's ascension, consisted in the former not being celebrated in the name of Jesus. But there is just as much difficulty in supposing it performed by his disciples in that name, during his abode on earth, as by his forerunner. It would have equally defeated the purpose of that caution which he uniformly maintained; and it is absurd to suppose that he would strictly charge his disciples to tell no man that he was the Christ, while he authorised them to disclose that very secret to the mixed multitude, as often as they baptized; nor could the use of his name in that ordinance be separated from such a disclosure.

4. In addition to this, it must be remembered that John and our Lord (by the hands of his disciples) both baptized at the same period: their ministry was contemporary. Now if we assert that our Lord enjoined one confession of faith in baptism, and John another, we shall have different dispensations of religion subsisting at the same time, and must suppose the people were under an obligation to believe one thing as the disciples of John, and another as the disciples of Christ. But this it is impossible to admit. There is unquestionably, at all seasons, a perfect harmony

in the economies of religion, so that two different ones are never in force at one and the same time. The first ceases when the second succeeds, just as Judaism was abolished by Christianity, and the patriarchal dispensation superseded by Judaism. Unless we are prepared to assert that the dispensations of religion are not obligatory, one light in which they must be considered is that of different laws, or codes of law; but it is essential to the nature of laws, that the new one, except it be merely declaratory, invariably repeals the old. In whatever particular it differs, it necessarily abolishes or annuls the former. But as John continued to baptize by divine authority, at the same time with the disciples of our Saviour, it is evident his institution was not superseded; consequently, it was of such a nature that it could subsist in conjunction with the baptism performed by our Lord, through the hands of his apostles. But for the reason already alleged, this could not have been the case, unless it had been one and the same thing. The inference I wish to deduce from the whole is, that the baptisms celebrated by Christ's disciples, during his personal ministry, in no respect differed from John's, either in the action itself, or in the import, but were merely a joint execution of the same work; agreeably to which, we find a perfect identity in the language which our Saviour enjoined his disciples to use, and in the preaching of John: "Repent ye, for the kingdom of God is at hand." Whatever

information our Lord imparted to his disciples beyond that which was communicated by his forerunner, (which we all know was much,) was given in detached portions, at distinct intervals, and was never embodied or incorporated with any positive institution, till after his ascension, which may be considered as the commencement of the christian dispensation, in its strictest sense.

THE

# ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE

BETWEEN

# CHRISTIAN BAPTISM,

AND THE

# BAPTISM OF JOHN,

MORE FULLY STATED AND CONFIRMED;

IN REPLY TO A PAMPHLET, ENTITLED "A PLEA FOR PRIMITIVE COMMUNION."

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[PUBLISHED IN 1816.]

# PREFACE.

WHETHER the writer of the following pages has acted judiciously in noticing the anonymous author of the *Plea, &c.* it is not for him to determine. He was certainly not induced to reply by any apprehension that the arguments of his opponent would produce much effect on candid and enlightened minds: but he recollected that what is not answered, is often deemed unanswerable. He has confined himself, as the reader will perceive, to that branch of the controversy which relates to the baptism of John: the consideration of the remaining parts, will more properly occur in reply to a work which is already announced to the public by a person of distinguished reputation. With an answer to that publication, it is the decided resolution of this author to terminate *his* part of the controversy.

LEICESTER,
*February* 14, 1816.

THE

# ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE

BETWIXT

# CHRISTIAN BAPTISM,

AND THE

# BAPTISM OF JOHN.

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THOUGH the author of the "Plea for Primitive Communion" has not thought fit to annex his name to that publication, as truth alone is the legitimate object of controversy, his claim to attention may be justly considered as little, if at all, impaired by that omission. Religious inquiry is an affair of principles, not of persons; and under whatever shape an author chooses to present himself to the public, he is entitled to notice in proportion to the force of his conceptions, and the candour of his spirit. How far the author under present consideration is possessed of these qualities, must be left to the judgement of an impartial public.

As he has confined nearly his whole attention to the question of the identity of John's baptism with the ordinance now in force, without pretending to enter into the general merits of the controversy, and this is a question which admits of separate discussion, and is in itself of some moment, the

following pages will be devoted to a defence of the sentiments which have been already advanced on that subject.

Previously to this, however, the patience of the reader is entreated for a few moments, while we endeavour clearly to state the *bearing* of this question on the controversy with which it has been connected. It was in deference to the sentiments of his opponents, rather than his own, that the author was induced to bestow so much attention upon it in his former treatise, persuaded as he is, that its connexion with the point in debate is casual and incidental, rather than real and intrinsic; since the only possible advantage to the cause of mixed communion, resulting from its decision, is the overthrow of an argument most feebly constructed. To be convinced of this, it is only necessary to remember that the admission of what our opponents contend for, would merely prove that the ordinance of baptism was promulgated at an *earlier period* than the Lord's supper. But in determining a question of duty resulting from positive laws, the era of their promulgation is a consideration totally foreign; we have merely to consider *what is enjoined,* and to what description of persons or things the regulation applies, without troubling ourselves to inquire into the chronological order of its enactment. In the details of civil life, no man thinks of regulating his actions by an appeal to the respective dates of the existing laws, but solely by a regard to their just

interpretation; and were it once admitted as a maxim, that the particular law latest enacted, must invariably be last obeyed, the affairs of mankind would fall into utter confusion. It would be the highest presumption to pretend to penetrate so far into the breast of the legislator, and into reasons of state, as to form a conjecture on the comparative importance of our duties, or the respective relations which they bear to each other, by an appeal to the distinct periods in which the laws were promulgated; nor is there any absurdity in supposing it possible that, for the wisest purposes, the law which is *last* enacted may prescribe the performance of an action antecedently to a different one enjoined by a prior enactment. Besides, the most extensive branch of the system of rules which is in force in this, and perhaps in most other countries, arises out of immemorial customs, which it would baffle the profoundest antiquarian to trace to their origin; whence it is evident that the principle in question is necessarily excluded from the widest department of legal obligations. It is a principle as repugnant to the nature of divine as it is to human legislation. It appears from the history of the patriarchs, that sacrificial rites were ordained much earlier than circumcision, but no sooner was the latter enjoined, than it demanded the earliest attention; and the offerings prescribed on the birth of a child, did not precede, but were subsequent to the ceremony of circumcision.

In the case of moral obligations, no one pretends

that their reciprocal relation and dependence is to be ascertained by an appeal to the distinct periods of their institution: their co-existence with human nature precludes the possibility of applying such a test; and he who consults impartially the dictates of conscience, confirmed and enlightened by revelation, will seldom feel himself embarrassed with respect either to the nature or the order of his duties.

In the case of positive duties, that is, such as result entirely from the *revealed* will of God, and with respect to which the voice of nature is silent, how far they are so inseparably linked together as to form a moral whole, in such a manner that the omission of one part renders an attention to the other a nullity, must depend entirely on the language of the institute. To attempt to establish any conclusion where that is silent, is at once to incur the censure justly attached to the application of hypothesis in the interpretation of positive laws, with this additional aggravation, that the hypothesis adopted on the present occasion is at least as precarious and unfounded as the worst of those by which the advocates of infant baptism have attempted to vindicate their practice. With unparalleled inconsistency, while the champions of strict communion affect, on the subject of baptism, the utmost veneration for the letter of scripture, they are driven in support of their sentiments to appeal, not to *what is enjoined*—not to a syllable of scripture, but to a chronological deduction of positive rites; a hard necessity surely, and the

more so when it will appear in the sequel, that this their forlorn post is untenable.

Before we proceed to notice the objections of the author of the *Plea* to the statements which have been made on the subject of John's baptism, it will be necessary briefly to recapitulate the grounds on which it was affirmed to be essentially distinct from the ordinance now in use. To such as have not perused the former treatise, the discussion would scarcely be intelligible without it; to such as have, it is possible some particulars may be presented in a clearer light.

The attentive reader of the New Testament will not have failed to remark that the rite performed by John is rarely, if ever, introduced without the addition of some explanatory phrase, or epithet, intended apparently to distinguish it from every preceding or subsequent religious observance. Thus it is sometimes denominated the baptism of John, on other occasions baptism in water, and the baptism of repentance, but is never expressed in the absolute form in which the mention of christian baptism invariably occurs. When the twelve disciples at Ephesus were asked into what (*i. e.* into what profession) they were baptized, they replied, into the baptism of John. Though innumerable persons were baptized by St. Paul, we read of no such expression as the baptism of Paul; on the contrary, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, he expresses a sort of pious horror at the very idea of such a supposition. Whoever considers the

extreme precision which the inspired historians maintain in the choice of the terms employed to represent religious ordinances, will perceive this circumstance to possess considerable weight.

It derives much additional strength, however, from reflecting that John's baptism is not only distinctly characterised in the evangelical narratives, but that he himself contrasts it with a superior one, which he directs his hearers to expect at the hand of the Messiah. "I indeed," said he, "baptize you in water, but there standeth one among you, whose shoe-latchets I am not worthy to unloose; he shall baptize you in the Holy Ghost and in fire;"* referring unquestionably to that redundance of prophetic and miraculous gifts, which were bestowed on the church, after the effusion of the Spirit. We accordingly find that, after his resurrection, our Lord commissioned his apostles to teach and baptize all nations, the execution of which order was *usually* accompanied by the collation of such gifts on believers, as fully corresponded to those predictions. Though He who is confined to no times or seasons, was pleased in some instances to communicate these preternatural endowments, previously to the act of baptizing, at others not in connexion with that rite; yet that they were its usual and expected concomitants, is evident from the language of St. Paul to the disciples at Ephesus, who, not having heard of such an effusion of the Spirit, were interrogated

* See Matt. iii. 11. and John i. 27, 33. Campbell's translation.

in the following terms: "Into what then were ye baptized?"* a question totally irrelevant but upon the supposition that these gifts were the usual appendage or effect of that ordinance. No such consequences followed the rite administered by John; an important disparity, to which he himself repeatedly directed the attention of his followers, as a decisive proof of his personal inferiority to him that *was to come*, as well as of the ceremony he administered, to that which should usher in the succeeding dispensation. In exact agreement with the genius of eastern phraseology, he suppresses the mention of *water* on this occasion, choosing rather to characterise an ordinance accompanied with such stupendous effects, by its more elevated feature, rather than by one, in which it coincided with his own.

Again, it is universally admitted that christian baptism has invariably been administered in the name of Jesus, and that circumstance is essential to its validity; while it is evident from the solicitude with which our Saviour avoided the avowal of himself as the Messiah, that during his personal ministry his name was not publicly employed as the object of a religious rite. After he had been declared on the mount of transfiguration to be the Son of God, he charged his disciples to tell no man of it, till he was risen from the dead; and when Peter had solemnly avowed his profession of faith in him under the same character, he and his fellow-apostles were strictly enjoined to tell no

* Acts xix. 3.

man that he *was the Christ.* Nor is there a single example of his publicly acknowledging that fact, until his arraignment before the high priest. But how this is consistent with the practice of baptizing in his name, which must have been equivalent, at least, to a public confession of his being the Messiah, it is difficult to conceive. If we examine the matter more closely, we shall perceive that ceremony to import much more; that it includes an act of adoration and of worship, of which He in whose name we are immersed, is the avowed object. To multiply words with a view to demonstrate the inconsistency of such a procedure with the acknowledged reserve maintained by our Lord on this subject, would be to insult the understanding of my readers; nor, when furnished with certain matter of fact, are we left to form an opinion from previous probabilities. The historian informs us that while John was baptizing, amidst an immense concourse of people from various parts of Judæa, *all men were musing in their hearts whether he were the Christ or not,** and that the deputation sent from the Sanhedrim to inquire into his character, were disposed to infer, from his introducing a new religious rite, that he pretended himself to be the Messiah. But how is it possible, let me ask, that such a question should arise amongst the people on the hypothesis maintained by our opponents? or how could it enter into their imagination to infer, from his baptizing in the name of Jesus, that

* Luke iii. 15.

he himself was, or that he pretended to be, the Messiah? His constant and daily practice must have completely precluded such a suspicion.

If St. Paul's citation of the language of John, in the nineteenth of the Acts, be correct, what he said to the people was this—"That they *should* believe on him who was to come."* The epithet, ὁ ἐρχόμενος, *he who is coming*, it is generally admitted, was the usual appellation applied to the Messiah at that period, which, while it expresses the certainty and near approach of the event of his coming, intimates, not less clearly, its *futurity*. At the time when the son of Zechariah entered on his ministry, nothing could be more accurate than the idea conveyed by that phraseology—the Messiah was not yet manifest to Israel; John was sent before him to announce his speedy appearance; he was as yet coming, not actually come; on which account, the language which the forerunner held was precise and appropriate; it was not a demand of present faith in any known individual, but was limited to a *future* faith on a certain personage who was about to evince his title to the character he assumed by his personal appearance and miracles. He said to the people that they *should* believe in him that was to come. Could the same person, let me ask, at the same moment be described by terms expressive of the present, and of the future tense, at once as an existing individual, a person historically known,

* Acts xix. 4.

and as one that was to come? In a word, if John expressed the act of faith which he required, in the future tense,* it unquestionably respected a future act; and if he described its object under the term ὁ ἐρχόμενος, *he that is to come*, he did not immerse in the name of Jesus, which would have been a palpable contradiction.

Again, the spiritual import of christian baptism, as asserted by St. Paul, transcends incomparably the measure of religious knowledge possessed during the ministry of John. "Know ye not," is his appeal to christians, "that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."† We have here an appeal to the conscience of all baptized persons respecting the spiritual signification of that ordinance, the views which it embraced, and the obligations resulting from thence to a holy and heavenly life. What is the meaning of the words *baptized into his death?* Whatever else it may comprehend, it unquestionably means the being baptized into a belief of his death. But at the time that John was fulfilling his course, this belief was so far from possessing the minds of his converts, that even the apostles were not only ignorant of that event, but impatient of its mention; and, with respect to his resurrection,

* πιστεύσωσι, Acts xix. 4. † Rom. vi. 3, 4.

we find these same apostles after the transfiguration, inquiring among themselves "what the rising from the dead could mean;"* while, from the expectation of the Jews at large, nothing was more abhorrent than the death and crucifixion of their Messiah. While they were thus unacquainted with the principal fact it is designed to exhibit, how could they possibly comprehend the import of christian baptism? In all probability they regarded the consecrated use of water merely as an emblem of purification, of that reformation of manners to which they were summoned; for to such a use of it they had long been accustomed; but for the sublime mysteries of the christian sacrament, connected with events of which they were ignorant, and with truths which were veiled from their eyes, they were utterly unprepared. It is impossible to evade the force of this argument, by distinguishing betwixt the disciples of John and those who were converted to the christian faith at a subsequent period. The language of St. Paul precludes the possibility of such a distinction. "*As many of us,*" says he, "as were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into his death;" which is surely equivalent to affirming that whoever were not baptized into his death, were not baptized into Christ. But the disciples of John were not baptized into (the belief of) his death. Therefore they were not baptized into Christ.

* Mark ix. 10.

We have already remarked, in a former treatise, that as the ministry of John commenced previously to that of the Messiah, which succeeded his baptism, no rite celebrated at that time is entitled to a place amongst christian sacraments, since they did not commence with the christian dispensation, nor issue from the authority of Christ, as Head of the church. The sacraments properly christian, undoubtedly belong to *the kingdom of God;* a phrase which is constantly employed in scripture to denote that state of things which is placed under the avowed administration of the Messiah, and which consequently could not precede his personal appearance. But during his residence on earth, until his resurrection, this kingdom is uniformly represented as future, though near at hand. Even after John's imprisonment, the language which he held respecting that object is the same: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel;"* which is also the precise intelligence he commanded the seventy disciples to proclaim,† a little before his decease. He was inaugurated into his office at his baptism, till which period he remained in the obscurity of private life, at the utmost remove from assuming a legislative character.

An attention to the general history of the period to which these transactions refer, will conduct us to the same conclusion. When we consider the

* Mark i. 15. † Luke x. 9.

great popularity attached to the ministry of the forerunner, and the general submission of the Jewish people to his doctrine, it is in the highest degree improbable that of the three thousand who were added by St. Peter to the church on one day, there were none who had been previously his disciples: this incredible supposition is reduced to an impossibility, when we recollect, that of the twelve apostles, two are actually affirmed by an evangelist to have been of that number. But as it is universally admitted, that they who were savingly convinced of the truth of christianity after the Pentecost, were baptized on that occasion, what conclusion can be more inevitable, than that the rite administered by the harbinger of our Lord, was essentially distinct from the christian ordinance?

To conclude this branch of the subject; the Acts of the Apostles furnish us with a decisive instance of an apostle's rebaptizing certain disciples of John at Ephesus; but, as we shall have occasion hereafter to examine that incident more fully, in reply to the evasions of the author of the *Plea*, I shall content myself at present with barely referring to it.

Such are the principal grounds on which we have ventured to assert the fundamental disparity betwixt the baptism of John, and the christian institute.

We now proceed to notice the manner in which the author of the *Plea for Primitive Communion* attempts to evade these arguments.

I. He endeavours to invalidate the assertion that John's commission did not originate in the command of Christ, or that he, on any occasion, ascribes his mission to the Father, in distinction from the Son. The author of *Terms of Communion* is charged with representing "John as uniformly doing that of which there is no decisive evidence he ever did at all; that is, ascribe his commission to the Father, *in distinction from the Son.*"*

We should have supposed that when the origin of a certain proceeding is constantly assigned to one agent, and no notice is taken of another, there is no impropriety in affirming that the proceeding in question is ascribed to him who *is* mentioned, in distinction from him who is *not*. But let the scripture speak for itself, and let the reader judge whether John did, or did not, ascribe his commission to the Father, in distinction from any other person. "He who sent me to baptize," said he, "the same said unto me, He on whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding on him, He it is who shall baptize in the Holy Ghost, and in fire."† Here the personage speaking distinguishes himself from the Messiah, as clearly as words can distinguish him, for he speaks of Christ in the third person, while he himself is denoted by the first: and so uniform is the language of scripture on this subject, that not a syllable is to be found

* Plea for Primitive Communion, p. 21.

† John i. 33. See the original.

in which the mission of John is ascribed to any other person than the Father.

But to ascribe any operation whatever to the Father in distinction from the Son, this writer contends, is inconsistent with the belief of the ineffable union which subsists betwixt those divine personages.* "Will those," he asks, "who believe the ineffable union of the Father and the Son, be disposed to conclude from this text that John derived his authority from the Father, to the exclusion of the Son?" To which I reply, that, believing firmly as himself, that there is such a union subsisting betwixt the personages in the blessed Godhead as constitutes them one living and true God, instead of inferring from thence, the impropriety of distinguishing their operations, it has always appeared to me, that the chief advantage resulting from the doctrine of the Trinity is, that it facilitates our conception of the plan of redemption, in which each of these glorious persons is represented as assuming distinct, though harmonious, offices and functions; the Father originating, so to speak, the Son executing, and the Spirit applying the several parts of that stupendous scheme. The Father, accordingly, is uniformly asserted to have sent the Son, the Son to have assumed the office of Mediator, and the Spirit to be imparted by both, to enlighten and sanctify the elect people of God. If we suffer ourselves to lose sight of

* Plea for Primitive Communion, p. 21.

such an application of the doctrine, it subsides into barren and useless speculation. And are we to be told that such is the ineffable union betwixt the Father and the Son, that the distinct exercise of these functions is an impossibility? We should have supposed that the act of *sending*, at least, might be safely ascribed to the Father, in distinction from the Son; unless, perhaps, this author, in the plenitude of his subtlety, has discovered a method by which a person may send himself. In spite of attempts to bewilder the plain reader by unmeaning abstractions, it will remain a palpable fact, that John's commission is ascribed to the Father, and to him alone; and that having originated before our Saviour assumed the legislative function, it is in no respect entitled to be considered as a christian institute. In addition to which we have only to remark, that to insist upon deriving John's mission from our Lord, is to implicate him in the charge of employing a collusive mode of reasoning. In reproving the unbelief of the Jews, he observes that "he did not bear witness of himself;" for had he done so, "his witness had not been true," in other words, not entitled to credit: but he adds, "there is another that beareth witness of me, and I know that which he witnesseth of me, is true. Ye sent unto John, and he bore witness to the truth."* But if the person to whose testimony he appeals in proof of his mission, was sent by himself, where is the

* John v. 31—33.

force of this reasoning, or what difference in point of credibility is there, betwixt his bearing witness of himself, and his prompting another to do it for him?

II. The author of the *Plea* next endeavours to shew the *identity* of the qualifications demanded by the forerunner of our Lord, with those which were demanded by his apostles after the day of Pentecost. After objecting to the accuracy of my statement on that article, without attempting to point out in what its incorrectness consists, he proceeds to remark, that, allowing it to be unexceptionably just, it will prove that the requisitions which were supposed to be different, coalesce into one and the same thing. The reason he adduces is the following: "As both John and the apostles are described as demanding faith, so that faith is to have the same object, and to be connected with the same facts in relation to that object, only some of these facts, John's disciples were to view as approaching; while the faith of those baptized by the apostles, embraced them as having actually occurred; for the great events respecting the Messiah, as boldly appealed to faith, when only occupying the prophetic page, as they do now they are become interesting details in the evangelical history."*

It will be freely admitted that the Saviour of the world is, in every period, and under every

* Plea for Primitive Communion, p. 23.

economy, the sole object of saving faith; but to infer from hence, that the profession which John demanded was an appendage of the dispensation introduced on the day of Pentecost, would equally demonstrate the Levitical ceremonies to belong to it, and would thus carry back the christian dispensation to the time of Moses. The next assertion, "that the belief of the same facts was required in the former instance as in the latter," is palpably absurd, as well as the reason assigned, which is, that they were foretold by the ancient prophets, and "that prophecy as boldly appealed to faith as the narrative of the evangelist." Every one must perceive, that if there is any force in this argument, it will prove that *whatever* was predicted of the Messiah must have been distinctly understood and firmly embraced by the disciples of the forerunner, as an essential prerequisite to the reception of baptism; since whatever was thus predicted was unquestionably presented as the object of faith; the place of his birth, his vicarious suffering, his resurrection, the spiritual nature of his kingdom, his rejection by the Jews, and the triumphant progress of the gospel amongst the Gentiles, with an infinite number of other particulars, were attested by the prophets. But will this author contend that all these circumstances were understood by John's converts, at a time when the immediate disciples of our Lord were intoxicated with the hopes of an earthly kingdom, and totally unapprised of their Master's death?

Or will he condescend to inform us on what principle so much more was requisite to constitute a disciple of John than an apostle of the Lord? Had it been a question of duty, instead of an inquiry into matter of fact, no difficulty would have been felt in acknowledging the justice of the rebuke which the apostles received for their hardness of heart, in not opening their minds more freely to the true interpretation of scripture. A cloud of carnal prejudices undoubtedly eclipsed a considerable portion of revealed truth; though, with the best dispositions, much must have remained obscure till the ancient prophecies were fulfilled. Previous to that period, if we listen to the inspired writers, instead of the author of the *Plea*, neither the prophets understood their own predictions, nor the apostles their true interpretation. To apply revelation in its utmost extent, without the smallest allowance for the inevitable involutions of prophecy, as a criterion of the portion of knowledge actually possessed by the successive generations of the faithful, is a mode of reasoning peculiar to this writer. *We* possess in the Apocalypse, a series of prophecies extending to the consummation of all things, a large portion of which is confessedly involved in obscurity; but what opinion should we entertain of the sagacity of him, who, at a period subsequent to their accomplishment, should contend that we of this age must necessarily have been apprised of the events which they foretold, solely on the ground

of their being the subject of prophecy? Such a reasoner will be the properest person to write a sequel to the *Plea for Primitive Communion.*

The author has been betrayed into these absurdities, by confounding together two things totally distinct—a sincere belief in the truth of inspiration, with an explicit knowledge of its contents. The prophets were invested with credentials which entitled them to the profound submission of mankind; but to receive their predictions as the word of God, is one thing, and so to penetrate their scope and intention as to be in possession of precisely the same facts, and acquainted with the same truths, with those who lived to witness their accomplishment, is another. All good men equally possessing the former, had the same *spirit* of faith; while, with respect to the latter, the situation of the hearers of the prophets under the law, and of the apostolic converts under the gospel, was most dissimilar. It is certain, from the eulogiums bestowed upon John, that his attainments in religious knowledge surpassed the highest of those of his predecessors; yet we are informed from the same authority, that the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. But in what is this superiority, so universally ascribed to christians, to be placed, except in an acquaintance with the facts attested after the day of Pentecost, and a knowledge of the mysteries with which they are inseparably allied? These, however, form the very core and substance of the apostolical testi-

mony, the unshaken profession of which was the indispensable condition of baptism; and among the foremost and most fundamental of these are the vicarious death and resurrection of our Lord, which we are compelled by their own testimony to believe were most remote from the previous expectation and belief of the apostles. Christian baptism is the "answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."*

In order to demonstrate the equality of the requisitions of John with those of the apostles, this writer has attempted to exhibit them in opposite columns. These columns, however, are not very majestic, nor very uniform, including only three passages on one side, and four on the other. Two remarks may be amply sufficient to counteract the effect of a device which is addressed to the eyes rather than to the understanding. The first is, that the explicit testimony which the harbinger bore to the character of our Lord, after his baptism, is adduced without the slightest advertence to the distinction of times, as a proof of the manner in which he first announced his commission; but as his knowledge of the person of the Messiah, we learn from his own declaration, was subsequent to that event, his language must necessarily have been modified by that circumstance. The second is, that we have no more reason to suppose that *his* disciples comprehended the true import of his instructions, or that they

* 1 Peter iii. 21.

interpreted them aright, than that the immediate disciples of our Lord understood similar declarations of their Master; from whom, we are infallibly certain, the sublimest part of his teaching was hid, until it was elucidated by events. And what but a blind attachment to hypothesis can obviate the suspicion that the followers of John were in the same predicament, unless we are prepared to affirm, either that they were the apter scholars, or had the more skilful master? As this writer lately applied the ample volume of prophecy as a criterion to ascertain the minimum, or lowest measure of knowledge requisite to constitute a disciple of John, so he now, with equal propriety, puts together all the scattered sayings of that great prophet, for the same purpose. If this be admitted in the case of the forerunner, it can, with no consistency, be withheld in the instance of our Lord; and by measuring the actual attainments of the apostles by the extent of his instructions, we shall find them little less enlightened and intelligent after his resurrection, than they were before that event. The fact, however, is far otherwise.

It requires little penetration to perceive that the true method of ascertaining (as far as it is practicable) the essential qualifications of John's candidates, is, not so much to consult detached sentences recorded of his ministry, as the actual state of religious knowledge at that period, the known attainments of the apostles, and above all, the language he is affirmed to have uttered,

at the moment he was celebrating his peculiar rite.

Whatever ideas he himself might affix to the terms "Lamb of God," and "Son of God," which it may not be easy exactly to determine, we may be certain that his followers did not comprehend their true import, because the apostles themselves were, long after, ignorant of the principal fact, or doctrine, denoted by the first of these appellations; and, therefore, to introduce these passages, as this writer has done, with a design to insinuate that they conveyed to the mind precisely the same impression as at present, is to presume too much on the simplicity of the reader. He should have been aware, that few are so bereft of the power of recollection, as to be incapable of detecting such flimsy sophistry.

Aware that confidence is contagious, he uniformly abounds in that quality in exact proportion to the weakness of his proofs. Of this, the following passage exhibits an egregious example:—After surveying his columns with a complacency not unlike the restorer of Babylon, he triumphantly exclaims, "Even prejudice itself might be expected to acknowledge, that so far from any material variation between John and the apostles, in introducing their respective candidates to baptism, they made a near approach to a syllabic agreement."*

* Plea for Primitive Communion, p. 24.

To say nothing at present of the name of Jesus, a point we shall have occasion to discuss hereafter, did John require of his candidates a profession of their belief in Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension? If he did, he was a superior teacher to his Master, and his disciples greater proficients than the apostles; a proposition which, however "boldly it may appeal to our faith," it is hard to digest. If, on the contrary, he acknowledges that a belief of these facts was *not* required by John as the condition of baptism, while it unquestionably was of the apostolic converts, what becomes of his syllabic agreement? and what temerity, not to say impiety, to represent these stupendous events, the death and resurrection of the Saviour, which involve the destinies of the human race, the incessant theme of the apostolic ministry, the basis of hope, the pillar, not the miserable columns of a page, but the column which props and supports a sinking universe, an affair of syllables, so that whether they are omitted or included, there exists a *syllabic agreement!*

Justly apprehensive of fatiguing the attention of the reader, the author cannot prevail on himself to dismiss this branch of the subject without bestowing a word more on the fallacious *medium* of proof employed in this instance by the writer of the *Plea*. Prophecy, he informs us, as "boldly appealed to faith" as history; from which the only legitimate inference is, that the disciple of reve-

lation is as much under obligation to give implicit credit to the prophets, as to the evangelists. *His* inference, however, is, that the precise measure of information yielded by the historian, must of necessity be possessed by the student of prophecy; than which nothing is more absurd and untenable. To reason in this manner is, in the first place, to forget the prodigious disparity in point of perspicuity betwixt the respective sources of information; and, secondly, in opposition to the decisive and repeated testimonies of inspiration, to presume that good men have uniformly exerted the ardour, impartiality, and diligence, in the pursuit of truth, to which it is justly entitled. Besides, when it is asserted that the prophetic page "as boldly appeals to faith, as the details of evangelical history," an ambiguity lurks in the word *appeal,* as well suited to the purposes of sophistry, as it is unfavourable to the enunciation of truth. It may either mean that it demands the *same credit* with historical details, or that it imposes an obligation to believe the same facts, and to penetrate the same mysteries. In the former sense the assertion is true, but foreign to the purpose; in the latter it is palpably false; at once repugnant to the nature of things as well as to the plainest fact. Many of the most important predictions were involved in a total obscurity; others were designed to excite a vague but elevated expectation, without ascertaining the features of a future event; none were designed to make that clear and determinate impression

upon the spirit, which is effected by their accomplishment. From the necessary obscurity of prophecy, combined with the ignorance and prejudice which obstruct its operation, it is impossible, in any case, by appealing to a prediction to ascertain the sentiments entertained even by good men antecedently to its fulfilment. The only clew to conduct us in this inquiry, is derived from the assertions of the evangelists, which as clearly confute the vain surmises and conjectures of this writer as if they had been recorded for that purpose.

The word *faith*, to the illiterate reader, is almost sure to suggest all the sentiments and ideas with which the gospel has made him familiar; and when we attempt to limit its objects by an impartial appeal to the actual state of religious knowledge before the coming of Christ, he feels himself confounded and amazed. His exclusive acquaintance with the present disqualifies him for transporting himself into past ages, and conceiving the ideas and sentiments prevalent in a situation so dissimilar. To do justice to the author of the *Plea*, it must be acknowledged, he has shewn no inconsiderable skill in availing himself of this prejudice.

What were the *precise views* entertained by the true Israel, of the offices of the Messiah, and of the work of redemption, previously to the christian æra, is one of the most curious and intricate questions of theology. Without attempting its solution, the writer of these lines may be permitted

to remark, that the Jewish belief was probably much more defective, and differed much farther from the christian, than has usually been suspected. The ignorance of the apostles, till after the resurrection, is a fundamental fact, a datum, which should never be lost sight of in this inquiry. It is not necessary, however, to assume it as a standard by which to regulate our estimate of every preceding degree of information. For when we recollect the long suspension of prophetic gifts in the Jewish church, the withdrawment of the Urim and Thummim, the extinction, in its sensible effects at least, of the theocracy, the intermixture of Jews and Gentiles, inseparable from the introduction of a pagan government, the influence of oriental philosophy, the division of the people into sects, and the extreme profligacy and corruption of manners prevalent at the time of our Lord's nativity, it will probably appear to have been the darkest period the church had experienced—resembling that portion of the natural day which immediately precedes the dawn, when the nocturnal light is extinguished, and the reflection of a brighter luminary not commenced.

But with all the consideration due to these circumstances, (and probably much is due,) there is still reason to suspect that the average degree of knowledge which divines have been accustomed to ascribe to Jewish believers, has been overrated. From the typical institution of piacular sacrifices, pointing to the *great propitiation*, it has been

confidently concluded, that in them believers distinctly recognised the mystery of atonement, by the blood of Christ. But supposing such to have been the fact, how shall we account for that doctrine occupying so small a portion of the succeeding prophecies; or for its so completely vanishing from the national creed, that the crucifixion of Christ afterwards became a stumbling block to the Jews, not less than foolishness to the Gentiles? A doctrine so congenial to the feelings of penitent devotion, involving the primary basis of hope, had it once been embraced, would undoubtedly have been inculcated with the utmost care, and transmitted to the posterity of the faithful in uninterrupted succession, instead of being suffered to fall into such oblivion that at the time of the Saviour's advent, every trace of it had disappeared. While christianity subsists, we entertain no apprehension of this great doctrine falling into neglect; its intrinsic evidence and importance will perpetuate it, unquestionably, amidst all the fluctuations of systems and opinions; and by parity of reason, its clear enunciation to the Jewish church, must have been productive of similar effects.

If we read the ancient prophecies with attention, we shall perceive, that the atonement made by the Saviour is scarcely exhibited in a single passage, except in the fifty-third of Isaiah, with respect to which the Ethiopian eunuch was at a loss to determine whether the "prophet spoke of himself, or of some other man:" we shall perceive that in

the practical and devotional books, such as the Psalms, the promise of pardon to the penitent, and of favour to the righteous, are expressly and repeatedly propounded, though with respect to the *medium* of acceptance, a profound silence is maintained. But how this is consistent with the supposed knowledge of that medium, it is not easy to discover. The habitual reserve on this subject maintained by the writers of the Old Testament, compared to its constant inculcation in the New, forms the grand distinction betwixt these respective portions of revelation; clearly evincing the truth of the apostle's assertion, that "the way into the holiest was not made manifest" while the ancient sanctuary subsisted.

It will perhaps be replied—Are we then to renounce the notion of the typical nature of sacrificial rites, and, in contradiction to the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, to assert that they bore no reference to the great propitiation? Nothing is more foreign from the purpose of these remarks.

That the ceremonial law was a prefiguration of good things to come, and owed its validity and efficacy entirely to the analogy which it bore to the *true sacrifice,* is placed beyond all reasonable controversy. All that is contended for is, that the reference which it bore was not understood, during the subsistence of that economy; that it is not to be considered as an interpretation of the doctrine of the atonement, so much as a sort of temporary

substitute for that discovery, and that it was a system of cyphers, or symbols, the true interpretation of which was reserved to a future period. It is no more essential to the existence of a type that its import be understood before it is verified, than it is essential to prophecy that its just interpretation be comprehended before it is fulfilled. If we consider the benefit derived to the ancient church, from prophecy in its strictest sense, we shall find it consisted not in making men prophets, or enabling them to foretel future events, but rather in maintaining high and consolatory views of the providence and the attributes of God, accompanied with a firm but humble assurance of his gracious interposition in their concerns.

A general expectation of the Messiah's advent, as of some glorious and divine personage, who would bestow the highest spiritual and temporal felicity, without descending to details, or foreseeing the *precise method* by which his interposition was to become effectual, appears to have nearly bounded the views of such as "waited for the consolation of Israel." Thus vague and general, at least, were the expectations of the faithful at the time of his appearance: to suppose they were ever materially different, is a gratuitous supposition, totally devoid of proof.

In discussing this point, it is expedient to distinguish betwixt the *fact*, and the *doctrine* of the atonement. The aspect of the atonement of God considered as a *transaction*, is towards God;

considered as a *doctrine*, towards man. Viewed in the former light, its operation is essential, unchangeable, eternal—"He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Considered in the latter, its operation is moral, and therefore subject to all the varieties incident to human nature. The cross, considered as the meritorious basis of acceptance, the only real satisfaction for sin, is the centre around which all the purposes of mercy to fallen man have continued to revolve: fixed and determined in the council of God, it operated as the grand consideration in the divine mind, on which salvation was awarded to penitent believers in the earliest ages, as it will continue to operate in the same manner to the latest boundaries of time. Hence it is manifest that this great transaction could admit of no substitute. But that discovery of it, which constitutes the *doctrine* of the atonement, though highly important, is not of equal necessity. Its moral impression, its beneficial effects on the mind, were capable of being secured by the institution of sacrifice, though in an inferior degree; while the offender, by confessing his sins over the head of the victim, which he afterwards slew, distinctly recognised his guilt, his just exposure to destruction, and his exclusive reliance on divine mercy.

By such elements of penitential sorrow, and humble submission, accompanied with a general expectation of a Messiah, devout worshippers were prepared for the reception of the sublimer

mysteries of the gospel; and thus "the law became a schoolmaster to lead them to Christ."

When St. Paul asserts that the same law was a shadow of "good things to come, and not the very image of those things," he clearly intimates an essential difference between the two economies, and that the Mosaic did not afford that acquaintance with the method of pardon and reconcilement, which constitutes the distinguishing glory of the gospel. But if the Levitical sacrifices instructed the pious Jew in the doctrine of vicarious atonement as it is now exhibited, they were already possessed of the substance, and the law could with no propriety be styled a schoolmaster intended to lead *them* to Christ, who had already arrived thither.

The passage to which we have already adverted, which affirms that the way into the holiest of all was not made manifest during the continuance of the first tabernacle, merits attentive consideration. From this and other similar passages, many of the fathers were led to infer that the souls of departed saints were not immediately received at death into the beatific vision, but waited for their future crowns till the general resurrection, while some of them were permitted to accompany our Saviour at his ascension, as trophies of his victory over the last enemy. As this is a notion which, it is probable, few at present will be disposed to embrace, so it was the necessary result of interpreting the words in too absolute a sense, and of

transferring to the *objects themselves*, what may with more propriety be referred to the *conception* entertained of those objects. Chrysostom paraphrases the text by remarking that the way into the holiest, or into heaven, was (ἄβατος) inaccessible: St. Paul merely affirms that it was not made manifest. Distinct from these two interpretations it seems impossible to find a third: the words must either intend that the way itself was not opened, or that the knowledge of it was not communicated, which is equivalent to asserting that the doctrine of the vicarious sacrifice of Christ was reserved to be developed in a future day.

If the justice of these observations be admitted, the situation of Jewish believers will appear indeed to have been far removed from that of christians, and the gospel dispensation will derive a prodigious accession of splendour from the comparison. It will be seen that they were "shut up," to use the language of inspiration, unto the faith to be revealed, that their state was comparatively gloomy, though not hopeless; and that they were upheld by general assurances of divine mercy, confirmed by the acceptance of their offerings; while they possessed no clear and distinct conception of the way in which it would be displayed, or by what expedient its exercise could be rendered consistent with the immutable holiness and justice of the divine nature.

"Ibant obscuri sola sub nocte per umbras."

Led by a way that they knew not, the obscurity with which they were surrounded must often have dismayed them; while the perturbations of conscience, on every recurrence of guilt, would clothe the last enemy with new terrors, and deepen the shades which invest the sepulchre. Hence arose that language of despondency uttered by Hezekiah, David, and others in the prospect of dissolution, together with the gloomy pictures which they frequently draw of the regions beyond the grave, natural to such as were "all their life, through fear of death, subject to bondage." Exposed to danger from which they knew no definite mode of escape, and placed on the confines of an eternity feebly and faintly illuminated, they had no other resource besides an *implicit* confidence in mysterious mercy.

But notwithstanding the extreme imperfection of their views, inasmuch as they *cordially* embraced the promises of God in the proportion in which they were then propounded, and cherished the expectation of a great Deliverer in the person of the Messiah, they possessed the spirit of faith. Genuine faith, considered as a principle, is characterized, not so much by the particular truths which it embraces, as by its origin, its nature, and its effects. When St. Paul describes the faith by which the elders obtained a good report, he refers not to the mysteries of the gospel, but specifies the persuasion that the worlds were made, or created, by the word of God, in opposition to

the opinion that they were formed out of pre-existent matter, which universally prevailed in pagan philosophy. He also enumerates, among its legitimate objects, the belief "that God is, and that he is the rewarder of such as diligently seek him;" and whoever examines with attention the various examples which he adduces of the operation of that principle, must be convinced that the idea of a vicarious propitiation is not absolutely essential to its nature, however necessary to salvation it has become, in consequence of the clear revelation of that doctrine.

Here, then, in all probability, consists the peculiar glory of the gospel, in contradistinction from the economy of Moses, that it deciphers the figures of the law, accomplishes and absorbs every purpose of its sacrifices, and dispels the obscurity which concealed eternal realities, by placing in a refulgent light that great mystery, hid from ages and generations, "by which God can be just, and yet the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." Thus the rigour and reserve which, under the ancient economy, generated a spirit of bondage, is exchanged for the glorious liberty of the sons of God. But it is time to return from this digression, which, though not totally irrelevant to the subject, has diverted the author's attention longer than he intended from the writer of the *Plea*.

III. In my former treatise, the omission of the name of Christ in the baptism of John was urged in proof of its being distinct from the christian

ordinance; on the contrary, in the total absence of scriptural evidence, my opponent contends that he not only baptized in the name of Jesus, but also in that of the Holy Trinity. Supposing such to have been the fact, upon what principle can we account for the silence of the sacred writer on so important a particular? for that it was important, and would have contributed more to elucidate the nature and extent of his mission than all the circumstances combined which they have thought fit to record, will scarcely be denied. What similar example occurs in the whole series of scripture history, of a minute and detailed account of a religious ceremony, in which the mention of its most essential feature is suppressed; or who will believe, that while the minutest particulars respecting John were deemed worthy of being recorded, one so remarkable and unprecedented as that of his baptizing in the name of the Trinity was too trivial to be mentioned? a circumstance of much greater moment, surely, than his subsisting on locusts, or his being clothed with a girdle. But beside the silence of scripture, which might of itself be deemed sufficiently decisive, the inconsistency of such a proceeding, with the known reserve our Lord uniformly maintained respecting his Messiahship, and his repeated charges to his disciples not to publish that fact, demonstrate the extreme improbability of his suffering himself to become the avowed object of a religious rite. The employment of his name for *such* a

purpose, it is obvious, was equivalent to a public declaration of his being the Messiah, and must have defeated his known intention. In the publication *On Terms of Communion,* this argument was repeatedly insisted on, and pursued to such an extent of illustration, that we should have supposed it impossible it could either be misunderstood or misrepresented. What is the reply of the author of the *Plea* to this argument? One of the most extraordinary in the annals of controversy: it is neither more nor less than this, that though our Lord frequently enjoined secrecy as to the dignity of his divine character, and the immediate object of his mission, there is not a single instance in which he manifested any delicacy as to his name.* He afterwards proceeds to tell us, with great gravity, that his name Jesus was as well known as that of Peter and John, and that he was addressed under that name equally by friends, enemies, and strangers. My reluctance to inflame this controversy with the language of exacerbation, reduces me, on this occasion, to a perplexity how to express myself. Is it possible, let me ask, he could so far mistake the scope and bearing of the reasoning, as to confound the use of the term Jesus, as the proper name, by which he was addressed in the ordinary intercourse of life, with the employment of it with that of the Father and the Holy Ghost, in a holy sacrament? Or will he contend that to call a person by the name of

* Plea for Primitive Communion, p. 27.

Jesus, or by any other appellation whatever, is precisely the same thing as to baptize in his name? He who is capable of confounding things so essentially distinct, is beyond the reach of reasoning: and if he did not confound them, but wished to put the change upon his readers, from a despair of being able to answer the argument, he has evinced a want of candour and good faith that merits the severest animadversion. Had his publication been a tissue of nonsense and stupidity throughout, we should have been strongly inclined to the former supposition; but when we reflect on the shrewdness which it occasionally displays, joined to his care not to glance, in the slightest manner, at the true hinge of the controversy, it is difficult not to suspect the latter. It may be questioned whether another person could have been found, acquainted with the English language, but would have instantly perceived that it was not the author's intention to insinuate a reluctance in our Lord to divulge his name, but the *fact* of his being the Messiah; and that it was the inseparable connexion of that fact with the practice of baptizing in his name, which was the ground of my objection. As he has not made the slightest attempt to solve the difficulty, it would be trifling with the patience of the reader to attempt to re-enforce it.

IV. The different effects which accompanied baptism, when performed by the apostles, and by John, were urged as a decisive proof that the two

baptisms were essentially distinct, and characteristic of separate economies. To such a distinction our attention is invited by the forerunner, who affirmed himself to baptize in water only, but that "he that came after him should baptize in the Holy Ghost, and in fire." To this the author of the *Plea* replies, by remarking, "that the argument proceeds on incorrect data: it appears to assume that water baptism, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost, are the same; or that the latter invariably followed the former. It will no doubt be regarded as a remarkable incident, that, in the midst of a zealous effort to separate between what is substantially the same, an attempt should be made to identify what is essentially different."*

After describing the baptism of the Holy Ghost as an effect which ordinarily accompanied immersion in the name of Christ, it will be deemed much more remarkable that the author should be accused of confounding them, or that he should be affirmed to have *identified* two things which stand to each other in the relation of cause and effect. If it be a fact that the communication of the Spirit usually accompanied the administration of baptism in the apostolic age, while no such communication was annexed to the ceremony of John, the author's position is correct. In proof of this fact, we have only to consult the Acts of the Apostles, which record the history of the first promulgation of the gospel. We there perceive that St. Peter held

* Plea for Primitive Communion, p. 29.

out the promise of the Spirit to the people, as a principal inducement to submit to the baptismal sacrament; and that when St. Paul found certain disciples at Ephesus, who, though baptized, had not heard of those supernatural endowments, he expressed his surprise, saying, "Into what then were ye baptized?" a question totally irrelevant, but upon the supposition that the reception of miraculous gifts was the stated appendage to that ordinance.

The only inquiry which can possibly arise on this subject is, whether John, in foretelling that the Messiah should baptize with the Holy Ghost, intended to allude to the sacramental water, or whether his attention was directed solely to the effusion of the Spirit, without reference to the external rite. This question, however, admits of easy decision, when we recollect that the corporeal rite was the usual preparative for the reception of spiritual gifts, that they were announced in immediate connexion with the act of baptizing, and that, though the ancient prophets almost universally foretold the abundant effusion of spiritual gifts and graces, which succeeded the advent of the Messiah, none before John made use of a figure, which, viewed apart from the visible action with which it was associated, would have been scarcely intelligible. His suppression of the mention of *water* is in perfect accordance with the genius of oriental speech, which, in the exhibition of a complex object, is wont to represent it only by its boldest and most impressive feature.

It is not necessary to the support of this reasoning, to assert that the communication of miraculous gifts *invariably* accompanied baptism: it is quite sufficient to account for the language of John, as well as to sustain the inference deduced from it, that such was the *stated* order. The instance of the Samaritans recorded in the eighth of the Acts, is urged as an exception, but when attentively examined, it is none. We are informed, indeed, that though they were already baptized, "the Holy Ghost was fallen upon none of them;" not, however, because the gift of the Spirit did not usually accompany the administration of that rite, but because the apostles, to whom alone the power of conferring it belonged, were not present. The case of the apostles themselves, and of Cornelius; it is admitted, may be considered as exceptions. In the former instance the outward ceremony was superseded, as we apprehend, partly by the previous baptism of the Spirit, and partly by their having been converted to christianity before the institution of that rite. In the latter, there was merely an inversion of the usual order: the Spirit was given prior to the administration of baptism, instead of succeeding it; but still they were closely conjoined in point of time, and sufficiently connected to justify the language of John.

To relieve the tediousness of the present discussion, let me here present the reader with a sample of the author's logic: "If these supernatural effects," he triumphantly remarks, "are

invariably to follow immersion in water, in order to demonstrate that this is really christian baptism, how is it they were copiously enjoyed by some who are supposed never to have received this institution?"* By an argument precisely similar, it were easy to demonstrate that the possession of reason is no essential ingredient in the constitution of human nature. For it might with equal propriety be urged, if such a principle enters necessarily into the definition of human nature, how is it that it is copiously enjoyed by beings (angels for example) who are supposed never to have received such a nature? This reply may be deemed amply sufficient for such a mode of reasoning: but in addition to this, let it be observed, that it was neither asserted nor insinuated, that miraculous gifts are invariably requisite to constitute christian baptism; but simply that the fact of their accompanying it, when performed by the apostles, was held up by John as a striking feature in the new dispensation. And where is the absurdity of admitting that, without contending for its perpetuity, miraculous gifts sufficiently marked the *transition* from one economy to another; or that it is a peculiarity worthy of mention among the characteristics of a period, denominated, in distinction from every preceding one, the dispensation of the Spirit?

V. Apprehensive of fatiguing the attention of the reader, we hasten to the last particular connected

* Plea for Primitive Communion, p. 30.

with this branch of the controversy, which is the decisive proof of the truth of my hypothesis, resulting from the fact, that the disciples of John were *baptized* by St. Paul. As the author of the *Plea*, however, finds it necessary to contradict it, it will be proper to quote the whole passage, as it stands in the common translation, the accuracy of which no critic has impeached:—"And it came to pass, that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus, and finding certain disciples, he said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied."* In examining this passage, with a view to the inquiry whether these men were baptized by St. Paul, or not, it is the fifth verse which especially claims our attention. The question turns entirely on the interpretation of the following words:—"When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of

* Acts xix. 1—6.

the Lord Jesus." These words must be understood either as the language of St. Paul, or of Luke the historian. Our opponents contend that they are to be understood as a continuance of St. Paul's address, in which he describes the nature and effects of John's baptism. Upon this interpretation the passage last quoted has no relation to the disciples at Ephesus, except as it was intended for their instruction; it is descriptive, not of what befell those disciples, but of the general submission of the Jewish people to the rite administered by John. And as it is asserted in the next verse that St. Paul laid his hands upon *them*, and they received the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, we are led to a most extraordinary paradox, the assertion that St. Paul actually laid his hands, not on the persons mentioned at the beginning of the paragraph, but, on that part of the Jewish people at large, who had been baptized by John, to whom he also communicated prophetic gifts. But as this proposition is too hard even for the powerful digestion of our opponents, they are compelled to adopt another expedient, which is to separate the relative pronouns in the last verse, and refer them, not to their immediate antecedent, but to a very remote one, at the distance of several verses. The only apology they make for this strange perversion of the language of inspiration is, that such interruptions of continuity are not uncommon, whereas we challenge them to produce a single instance of such a construction, not merely in the New

Testament, but in the whole compass of Greek literature. Examples may possibly be adduced, where the relative pronoun is connected with an antecedent equally remote, but none, most assuredly, where its relation to an immediate antecedent is so obvious, and so natural, that the true interpretation in opposition to that which presents itself at first sight becomes a perfect enigma. Were there difficulties arising on each side, we might be induced to acquiesce in a construction, which, however unnatural or unusual, suggested the only consistent sense; but to have recourse to such a contrivance merely to avoid that construction, which is recommended by every rule of grammar, and against which not a shadow of objection lies, except its repugnance to hypothesis, is a proceeding at which liberal criticism must blush. If such a mode of expounding scripture were adopted on other occasions, it is difficult to say what absurdity might not be obtruded on the sacred volume. The manner in which the author of the *Plea* criticises the passage, is such as might be expected from the advocate of so hopeless a cause. He neither ventures to quote it, nor to make the slightest remark on its principal clauses; but contents himself with putting a speech into the mouth of St. Paul, in which every thing runs perfectly smooth and easy; and since it is much easier to make speeches than to elucidate difficulties, or establish paradoxes, we commend his policy. His only remaining effort is confined to the introduction of a

parallel passage; but unfortunately it turns out that his pretended parallel affords an example of as plain and obvious a construction of words as is to be found in the sacred pages. It is a passage which, instead of presenting a choice of difficulties, difficulties of *his* kind I mean, where grammar is on one side, and hypothesis on the other, suggests a sense in which all mankind have acquiesced—a sense which no degree of stupidity can miss, or artifice evade.* The only resemblance it bears to the portion of history under consideration is, that it relates a similar incident, where certain persons who had been baptized had not yet received the gifts of the Holy Ghost. To attempt the defence of a most unnatural interpretation of Greek words, not by an appeal to a passage which exhibits a similar peculiarity of construction, but merely a similarity of occurrence, is egregious trifling.

To the argument founded on the extreme improbability that none of the numerous converts on the day of Pentecost were previously disciples of John, no reply is attempted.

I cannot dismiss this subject without noticing the extreme deficiency of information respecting

* This wonder-working passage is as follows: "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." Acts viii. 14—17.

the history of religious opinions this author evinces, when he stigmatizes the sentiments advanced, as a modern theory. They are so far from meriting that reproach, that they boast the suffrages of all the fathers, without exception, who have touched upon the subject; nor would it be easy to discover a single divine, previous to the reformation, by whom they were not embraced; and, since that period, they have received the sanction of Grotius, Hammond, Whitby, Doddridge, Chillingworth, and a multitude of other names of nearly equal celebrity. On an accurate inquiry, it will probably be found that the absurd interpretation of the passage we have just been considering, which is so necessary to the support of the opposite hypothesis, originated in the horror excited at the conduct of the anabaptists at Munster, by which certain divines of the reformation felt themselves strongly disposed to shun whatever might bear the semblance or colour of anabaptism; that, in short, the doctrine here advanced is the revival of an ancient, rather than the invention of a new opinion.

To the sincere inquirer, the antiquity or the novelty of a doctrine will appear a consideration of little moment, compared to the evidence by which it is supported; yet, as a natural prejudice exists against violent departures from the ancient course of interpretation, it is but just to endeavour, as much as possible, to disengage the cause of truth from this incumbrance.

The author of the *Plea* expresses a sort of horror at the thought of a plurality of baptisms, forgetting, it should seem, that the doctrine of *baptisms,* in the plural number, is placed by St. Paul amongst the first principles of the oracles of God. It is difficult to conceive to what baptisms he could refer, except those which are the subject of the present discussion: the baptism of the Spirit, which was the highest gift of God, could with little propriety be termed a doctrine, much less enumerated amongst the first principles of christianity; and the Jewish washings constituted no part of that system.

Having presented the reasons on which the baptism of John was affirmed to be essentially distinct from the christian ordinance, at so much length, it is high time to relieve the attention of the reader, by dismissing the subject.

There is one more observation, and one only, to which the author requests his attention. If we admit that the Jewish people were baptized in the name of Christ, considering the prodigious multitudes who repaired to John for that purpose, the conduct of a great part of that nation must be viewed in a new light; and instead of being chargeable with a uniform rejection of the Messiah, they must be considered as *apostates;* upon this supposition, they violated the most sacred engagements, and impiously crucified their Prince, after consecrating themselves to his service by the most awful solemnities. The evangelist informs us that

"he came to his own, but his own received him not;" but the more accurate statement would have been, that they first received, and afterwards rejected him; received him on the testimony of the forerunner, and rejected him after witnessing the immaculate purity of his life, the wisdom of his discourses, and the splendour of his miracles.

There is attached to apostasy a character of perfidy and baseness peculiar to itself—a species of guilt which the inspired writers frequently paint in the darkest colours; yet, strange to tell! though they had no motives to conceal or palliate the conduct of their countrymen, in their treatment of the Messiah, but many motives to the contrary, not a syllable escapes them of the charge of apostasy. What terrible energy would that accusation have lent to St. Peter's address! What unspeakable advantage for alarming their consciences would he have derived from reminding them of their baptismal vows, and of their unspeakable impiety in crucifying the divine person to whom they had previously dedicated themselves in solemn rites of religion. When St. Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, gives loose to one of his finest bursts of indignant feeling and rapid eloquence, in a brief portraiture of the character of his countrymen, the circumstance which would have given incredible force to the picture is suppressed; and not having perused the author of the *Plea*, he seems to entertain no suspicion of their having been baptized in the name of Jesus.

It is not less unaccountable that the ancient prophets contain no allusion to this event, but describe the future rejection of the Messiah as coeval with his appearance; and that the most singular fact in sacred history is neither the subject of narration, nor of prophecy, but was reserved for the detection of the nineteenth century.

Having replied to this anonymous writer on every particular connected with the baptism of John, it is unnecessary to trouble the reader by animadverting on the other parts of his performance: the few observations it contains which are pertinent to the subject, are too loose and superficial to deserve attention, especially since a work is announced by a writer, who will probably discuss the remaining topics with superior ability. We shall notice only two circumstances, illustrative of the author's management of the controversy. He devotes his first section to a synopsis of the principles advanced in the treatise *On Terms of Communion;* which he has extended to the number of fourteen. Several of these, disguised by a little variety of language, are identically the same; some grossly misrepresented; and all of them expressed, not in the terms of the author, but in such as are adapted to give them as much of the air of paradox as possible. It is obvious that he who wishes to judge of them fairly, must view them in their proper place, accompanied with their respective proofs and illustrations; and that to tear them from their connexion, and exhibit

them in a naked form, though they had been expressed in the author's own terms, is a direct appeal to prejudice. The obvious design is to deter the reader at the outset, and to dispose him to prejudge the cause before it is heard. To mingle in the course of a controversy insinuations and inuendos which have no other tendency than to impair the impartiality of the reader, is too common an artifice; but such an open barefaced appeal to popular prejudice is of rare occurrence. It is an expedient to which no man will condescend, who is conscious of possessing superior resources. To this part of his performance no reply will be expected; for though the author feels himself fully equal to the task of answering his opponent, he confesses himself quite at a loss to answer himself. Like a certain animal in the eastern part of the world, who is reported to be extremely fond of climbing a tree for that purpose, he merely pelts the author with his own produce.*

Another charge, however, is adduced, of more serious import. For presuming to speak of conditions of salvation, he is accused of employing anti-evangelical language, and suspicions of his orthodoxy are pretty broadly insinuated. When the term *conditions* of salvation, or words of similar import, are employed, he wishes it once for all

* As this allusion has been much misrepresented, I may be permitted to remark, that it is simply to the practice of monkeys adroitly to catch and throw back again, the sticks, stones, and other substances that are cast at them. Ed.

to be clearly understood that he utterly disclaims the notion of *meritorious* conditions, and that he intends by that term only what is necessary in the established order of means, a *sine qua non*, that without which another thing cannot take place. When thus defined, to deny there are conditions of salvation, is not to *approach* to antinomianism merely, it is to fall into the gulf. It is nothing less than a repeal of all the sanctions of revelation, of all the principles of moral government. Let the idea of *conditional* salvation, in the sense already explained, be steadily rejected along with the term, and the patrons of the worst of heresies will have nothing further to demand. That repentance, faith, and their fruits in a holy life, supposing life to be continued, are essential prerequisites to eternal happiness, is a doctrine inscribed, as with a sunbeam, in every page of revelation; and must we, in deference to the propagators of an epidemic pestilence, be doomed to express, by obscure and feeble circumlocutions, a truth which one word will convey, especially when that word, or others of a precisely similar meaning, has been current in the productions of unquestionable orthodoxy and piety in every age? The author is at a loss to conceive on what principle, or for what reason, dangerous concessions are due to antinomianism; that thick-skinned monster of the ooze and the mire, which no weapon can pierce, no discipline can tame. If it be replied, why adhere to an offensive term, when its

meaning may be expressed in other words, or at least, by a more circuitous mode of expression? the obvious answer is, that words and ideas are closely associated; and that, though ideas give birth to terms, appropriate terms become, in their turn, the surest safeguard of ideas; insomuch that a truth, which is never announced but in a circuitous and circumlocutory form, will either have no hold, or a very feeble one, on the public mind. The anxiety with which the precise, the appropriate term is avoided, bespeaks a shrinking, a timidity, a distrust, with relation to the idea conveyed by it, which will be interpreted as equivalent to its disavowal. While antinomianism is making such rapid strides through the land, and has already convulsed and disorganised so many of our churches, it is not the season for half measures; danger is to be repelled by intrepid resistance, by stern defiance, not by compliances and concessions; it is to be opposed, if opposed successfully, by a return to the wholesome dialect of purer times. Such is the intimate alliance betwixt words and things, that the solicitude with which the term *condition*, and others of similar import, have been avoided by some excellent men, has contributed, more than a little, to the growth of this wide-spreading pestilence. As almost every age of the church is marked by its appropriate visitation of error, so, little penetration is requisite to perceive that antinomianism is the epidemic malady of the present, and that it is an evil of

gigantic size, and deadly malignity. It is qualified for mischief by the very properties which might seem to render it merely an object of contempt—its vulgarity of conception, its paucity of ideas, its determined hostility to taste, science, and letters. It includes, within a compass which every head can contain, and every tongue can utter, a system which cancels every moral tie, consigns the whole human race to the extremes of presumption or despair, erects religion on the ruins of morality, and imparts to the dregs of stupidity all the powers of the most active poison. The author will ever feel himself honoured by whatever censures he may incur, through his determined opposition to such a system.

# A REPLY

TO

# THE REV. JOSEPH KINGHORN:

BEING

## A FURTHER VINDICATION OF THE PRACTICE

OF

## FREE COMMUNION.

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"Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I, that I should withstand God?"—Acts xi. 17.

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[PUBLISHED IN 1818.]

# PREFACE.

After announcing an intention of replying to Mr. Kinghorn, the public seem entitled to some account of the causes which have delayed the reply so long. Various conjectures have probably arisen on the subject. By many, no doubt, it has been suspected that the delay was occasioned by a perception of the difficulty of constructing an answer which would be deemed satisfactory, and that the engagement to reply was made, without anticipating so formidable an opposition. That the author was, to a certain extent, deterred by a feeling of difficulty, it is impossible to deny; but the reader is probably not aware in what the difficulty lay. It had no relation to the argumentative force of Mr. Kinghorn's production, in whatever degree it may be supposed to possess that attribute, but solely to the manner in which he has chosen to conduct the debate. The perpetual recurrence of the same matter, the paucity of distinct and intelligible topics of argument, together with an obvious want of coherence, and of dependence of one part on another, give to the whole the air

of a series of skirmishing and desultory attacks, rather than of regular combat; rendering it difficult to impart that order and continuity to a reply, in the absence of which, argumentative discussions are insufferably tedious. With the eagerness of a professed pleader, he has availed himself of every topic which could afford the slightest colour of support to his cause, with little scrupulosity, apparently, respecting the soundness of the principles from which he argues. In a word, he has conducted his share of the warfare in a manner which renders him more formidable from the irregularity and quickness of his movements, than from the steady pressure of his columns.

Though he has advanced some new, and as they appear to me, paradoxical positions, the space which they occupy is so small, compared to that which he has allotted to arguments and objections distinctly noticed and replied to in my former treatise, that it seemed almost impracticable to answer the greater part of the work, without a frequent recurrence to what had been already advanced. But a writer is never more certain of disgusting than when he is the echo of himself.

On these accounts, had my private conviction dictated the course which it seemed proper to pursue, the following work, instead of swelling to its present bulk, would have been limited to some short strictures on those parts of his reply in which my respectable opponent has quitted the track of his predecessors. But to this there were serious

objections. In the estimation of multitudes, little qualified to appreciate the weight of an argument, to be brief and to be superficial, are one and the same thing: no publication is admitted to be solidly answered, except the reply bears a certain proportion to it in size and extent; and whatever is not distinctly noticed and discussed, however irrelevant, or however trivial, is instantly proclaimed unanswerable. These considerations determined me rather to hazard the imputation of tediousness, than to attempt a very concise reply, which, however cogent, would be construed by many into a tacit acknowledgement of my incapacity to combat the reasoning of my opponent. Having, therefore, only a choice of evils, and necessitated either to make a large demand on the patience of the reader, or to incur the suspicion of evading what could not be successfully encountered, I preferred the former; endeavouring at the same time to shun, as much as possible, a tiresome repetition of the same topics; with what success, the public will determine.

The preceding remarks will explain one cause of delay: to which may be added, a strong disinclination to controversy, the want of a habit of composition, repeated attacks of illness at one period, and various avocations and engagements at another, too unimportant to be obtruded on the attention of the reader.

It may also be remarked, in extenuation of the charge of procrastination, that the subject is just

as interesting and important as when the controversy commenced. The evil in which it originates is not local, nor of an ephemeral or transitory nature: it will continue to subsist, there is reason to fear, after the present generation is consigned to the dust; and even the delay may not be altogether without its advantages. Both parties will have had leisure to reflect, the reasoning on each side of the question time to settle, and to find its level in the public mind, undisturbed by that disposition extravagantly to depreciate and to extol respectively the performances it has given rise to, which almost invariably distinguishes the outset of a controversy. Whatever appears in the present stage, it is but justice to consider as the result of more matured observation and inquiry, compensating in pertinence and solidity what it may want in vivacity and ardour.

It is remarkable that without any previous knowledge or concert, a discussion on the subject of communion commenced nearly at the same time on both sides the Atlantic; and the celebrated Dr. Mason, of New York, justly regarded as one of the brightest ornaments of the western hemisphere, was exerting the energies of his most powerful mind in establishing the fundamental position of the treatise *On Terms of Communion* almost at the very moment that treatise appeared. A coincidence so rare, a movement so simultaneous, yet so unpremeditated, we cannot but look upon as a token for good, as an indication of the

approach of that period, so ardently desired by every enlightened christian, when genuine believers will again be of "one heart and of one mind." Let us hope that America, the land of freedom, where our pious ancestors found an asylum from the oppression of intolerance, will exert, under the auspices of such men as Dr. Mason, a powerful reaction on the parent state, and aid her emancipation from the relics of that pestilential evil, still cherished and retained in too many British churches.

Independent of other considerations, that invaluable person possesses one obvious advantage over the author of the following performance. Disengaged from the spurious refinements and perplexing subtleties which arise from the subject of baptism, by which our opponents attempt to evade the application of his general principle, his movements are in consequence more free and unfettered, and his force operates in a more simple direction than is compatible with the state of the question, as it respects the views of the baptist denomination. He fearlessly spreads his sails to the winds, and triumphs on the element which is congenial to the amplitude and grandeur of his mind. Mine is a coasting voyage, in which the author feels himself necessitated to creep along the shore, and to comply with all its irregularities, in the midst of flats and shoals, and exposed to perpetual annoyance from the innumerable small craft which infest these shallow waters. The

effect of the different situations in which we are placed, is to give a luminous simplicity to his mode of conducting the argument, which forms a striking contrast, not only to the tedious logomachies which I have been compelled to encounter,* but to the manner in which I have attempted to confute them. It belongs to a Pascal, and perhaps to a few others of the same order of genius, to invest the severest logic with the charms of the most beautiful composition, and to render the most profound argumentation as entertaining as a romance. The author makes no such pretension: having confined his endeavours to an attempt to establish his assertions by sufficient proof, and to expose the sophistry of his opponent, he must be allowed to remind his readers that no quality will be found more necessary than patience. Truth, as far as he knows himself, is his sole object; and if they are actuated by the same disposition, though they will find little to amuse, it is possible they may meet with something to instruct them.

It is surprising how little attention an inquiry into the principles which ought to regulate our intercourse with other denominations, (a question of considerable moment, in whatever light it be

* Though Dr. Mason was not led by the course of his argument to treat of the question of *mixed communion*, in the usual import of that phrase, his general principle not only necessarily infers it, but I have had the satisfaction of learning from his own lips his entire approbation of the doctrine advanced in *Terms of Communion*.

viewed,) has excited. Though it has given birth to a few publications, at very distant intervals, none, as far as my information extends, have produced any deep impression, or any extensive and permanent effects. On this subject, a spirit of slumber seems to have oppressed our faculties, from which we have hardly ever completely awoke. From the appearance of Mr. Bunyan's treatise, entitled *Water Baptism no Bar to Communion,* to the publication of the celebrated Mr. Robinson, a whole century elapsed, with few or no efforts to check the progress of the prevailing system, which had gained so firm a footing previous to Mr. Booth's writing, that he felt no scruple in entitling his defence of that practice, *An Apology for the Baptists.* The majority appear to have carried it with so high a hand, that the few churches who ventured to depart from the established usage were very equivocally acknowledged to belong to the general body, and seem to have been content to purchase peace at the price of silence and submission. The most virulent reproaches were cast upon the admirable Bunyan, during his own time, for presuming to break the yoke; and whoever impartially examines the spirit of Mr. Booth's Apology, will perceive that its venerable author regards him, together with his coadjutors and successors, much in the light of rebels and insurgents; or, to use the mildest terms, as contumacious despisers of legitimate authority. Mr. Kinghorn, in the same spirit,

evinces an eagerness, at every turn, to dispute our title to be considered as complete baptists. In short, whether it is to be ascribed to intimidation, or to some other cause, the fact is notorious, that the zeal evinced on the side of free communion, has hitherto borne no proportion to that which impels the advocates of the opposite system, whose treatment of their opponents, in most instances, bears no very remote resemblance to that which moderate churchmen are accustomed to receive at the hands of their high church brethren.

Another cause has probably cooperated towards the production of the same result. Some, whose character commands the highest respect, are known to deprecate the agitation of the present controversy, from an apprehension of the injury the denomination may sustain, by the exposure of its intestine dissensions. For my own part, I am at a loss to conceive the grounds on which such a policy can be justified. Could the fact, that we are at variance among ourselves on the subject under discussion, be concealed, something might be urged in favour of the prudence of such a measure; nothing, certainly, for its magnanimity. But, since that is impossible, and whoever is acquainted with the state of the denomination, is aware of the diversity which subsists in the constitution of our churches in this particular, the true state of the question is, whether that article of the Apostles' Creed which asserts *the communion of saints*, is to be merged in an exclusive zeal for

baptism, and its systematic violation, in our judgement at least, to remain unnoticed and unchecked, in deference to party feelings and interests. We are at a loss to conceive how the association of truth with error is capable of benefiting the former; or how it can be eventually injured by an attempt (conducted in a christian spirit) to dissolve an alliance which resembles the junction of the living with the dead. While the preservation of peace is dear to us, the interests of truth are still more so; and we would fix our eyes on the order in which the attributes of that celestial wisdom are enumerated, which is "*first* pure, then peaceable."

Before closing this Preface, I must be allowed to advert to a circumstance intimately connected with the eventual success of the cause in which I am embarked. It is the general practice of our churches, whatever may be the sentiments of the majority, to continue the practice of strict communion, in almost every instance where the opposite system is incapable of being introduced with a perfect unanimity; in consequence of which, it frequently happens that the constitution of the church continues to sanction strict communion, while the sentiments of a vast majority of its members are decidedly in favour of a contrary system; and, in opposition to the usage which obtains on other occasions, the private sentiments of the few, are made to regulate and control the conduct of the many. Where, it may be asked,

is the propriety, where the justice, of such a mode of proceeding? Whatever respect may be due to the conscientious, though erroneous, scruples of an upright mind, it is not easy to perceive why these should be permitted to prescribe to the better judgement of those whom *we* must necessarily consider as more enlightened.

As the majority, convinced, as they are supposed to be, of the right of all genuine christians to communion, must necessarily regard the dissentients as being in error, it deserves to be considered in what manner error ought to be treated. Ought it to be the object of toleration, or should it be invested with dominion? Surely all it can reasonably claim is the former; but when, in deference to it, the far greater part of a society refrain from acting agreeably to their avowed principles, and consent to withhold, from another class of their fellow-christians, what they consider as their undoubted right, they cannot be said merely to tolerate the error in question; no, they in reality place it on the throne—they prostrate themselves before it. Yet, strange as it may appear, such is at present the conduct of baptist societies. While there remains the smallest scantling of members averse to open communion, the doors, in compliance with their scruples, continue shut, and pædobaptist candidates, however excellent, or however numerous, are excluded.

Thus the intolerance of one class of christians is not only indulged, but pampered and caressed,

while the religious profession of another is treated as a nullity. The incongruity of this mode of proceeding is also extremely obvious in another view. The admission of members in our societies, it is well known, is determined by a majority of suffrages, where the minority is expected, and that most reasonably, quietly to acquiesce in the decision of the majority. But in the case under present consideration, where strict communion is practised in a church, the majority of whose members are of a contrary persuasion, the eligibility, not of an individual, but of a whole class of individuals, to an indefinite extent, is virtually determined by the judgement of the smaller, in opposition to the larger party.

The injustice of such an arrangement will, perhaps, be admitted; but how, it will be asked, can it be remedied? Would it be proper to exclude such as feel it impossible, with a good conscience, to commune with pædobaptists, in order to make room for the latter? Nothing is more remote from our intention. Without inflicting the slightest wound on those amiable and exemplary persons who scruple the lawfulness of that measure, the remedy appears equally simple and obvious.

Whenever there is a decided majority in a church, whose views are in unison with those which we are attempting to recommend, let them throw down the barriers, and admit pious pædobaptists without hesitation; and let those whose principles deter them from joining in such a com-

munion, receive the Lord's supper apart, retaining, at the same time, all their rights and privileges unimpaired. By this simple expedient, the views of all the parties will be met; the majority will exert their prerogative, and act consistently with their avowed principles; the pædobaptists will obtain their rights; and the abettors of strict communion will enjoy that state of separation and seclusion which they covet. By this means, a silent revolution may be effected in our churches, unstained by a particle of violence or of injustice. But, while the present plan is pursued, while we are waiting for the last sands of intolerance to run out, the domination of error and injustice may be prolonged to an interminable period, since, of all creatures, bigotry is the most tenacious of life.

Sudden and violent reformations are not only seldom lasting, but the mischief which results, and the disgust they excite, often produce a reaction, which confirms and perpetuates the evil they attempt to eradicate. For this reason, great prudence and moderation are requisite in every effort to meliorate the state of public bodies. He who aspires to remove their prejudices, must treat them with tenderness and respect, urging them to no step for which they are not fully prepared, by a mature and widely extended conviction of its propriety; for no innovations, however desirable in themselves, will be permanently beneficial, the stability and perpetuity of which are not guaranteed

by the previous illumination of those by whom they are adopted.

Having devoted more time and attention to the present controversy already, than many are disposed to think it entitled to, it is by no means my intention to renew it, conceiving it a contemptible ambition to determine to have the last word, which is nothing less than to aspire at a preeminence in pertinacity. Resting with perfect confidence on the truth, and, consequently, on the ultimate triumphs of the principles which I have attempted to defend, the detection of incidental mistakes, and the exposure of minor errors, will not disturb my repose, however justly they may awaken a feeling of regret that the powers of the advocate were not more commensurate with the merits of the cause.

If the author has been, on any occasion, betrayed, in the ardour of debate, into language which the reader may deem disrespectful to his opponent, it will give him real concern. He knows none whose character entitles him to higher esteem; nor is he insensible to the value of those expressions of personal regard with which Mr. Kinghorn has honoured him, nor of that general mildness and urbanity, which is at once the character of his mind and of his performance. Aware of the tendency of controversy to alienate the parties from each other, who engage in it, it is matter of regret, on that account, and on that only, that it was my lot to meet with an antagonist

in Mr. Kinghorn.* In every other respect, it is a fortunate circumstance for the cause of truth; for while his temper affords a security from that virulence, and those personalities, which are the opprobrium of theological debate, his talents ensure his doing justice to his cause, perhaps beyond any other person of the same persuasion. A very different performance, in many respects, was anticipated, it is true; nor could the extraordinary assertions, not to say adventurous paradoxes, he has hazarded, fail to excite surprise; although his character exempts him from the suspicion of that arrogance and conceit, in which they usually originate. They are rather to be ascribed to a dissatisfaction (which he dares not pretend to conceal) with former apologists; and a determination, if possible, to compass the same object by a different route. The intelligent reader will probably be of opinion, that he has attempted to give an air of originality to what was not susceptible of it; and that, aiming to enrich and support a most meagre and barren thesis, by new arguments, he is reduced to the same necessity as the Israelites, that of "making bricks without straw."

Having already made the porch too large for the building, one additional remark only is submitted to the attention of the reader, previous to his entrance on the following discussion. The little success which has attended our exhibition of

* Mr. Kinghorn studied under Mr. Hall, at the Bristol Academy. Ed.

the doctrine of baptism, continued now for many generations, deserves the serious consideration of every intelligent baptist. With all our efforts, with all the advantage of overwhelming evidence, (as appears to me,) in favour of our sentiments, the prospect of their reception, (to say nothing of established churches, where there are peculiar impediments to be encountered,) the prospect of their reception by dissenting communities is as distant as ever: and it may be doubted whether, since the recent revival of religion, our progress is in a fair proportion to that of other denominations. It may be possible to assign the second causes of this remarkable event; but as second causes are always subservient to the intentions of the first, it deserves our serious consideration, whether we are not labouring under the sensible frown of the great Head of the church; and "is there not a cause?" A visible inferiority to other christians in zeal and piety will scarcely be imputed; nor have we been left destitute of that competent measure of learning and talent requisite to the support of our doctrines. The cause of our failure, then, is not to be looked for in that quarter. But though we have not "drank with the drunken," if we have unwittingly "beaten our fellow-servants," by assuming a dominion over their conscience; if we have severed ourselves from the members of Christ, and under pretence of preserving the purity of christian ordinances, violated the christian spirit; if we have betrayed a lamentable want of that "love which

is the fulfilling of the law," by denying a place in our churches to those who belong to the "church of the first-born," and straitening their avenue, till it has become narrower than the way to heaven; we may easily account for all that has followed, and have more occasion to be surprised at the compassionate Redeemer's bearing with our infirmities, than at his not bestowing a signal blessing on our labours.

# PART I.

THE FUNDAMENTAL POSITION; OR, THE SUPPOSED NECESSARY CONNEXION BETWEEN THE TWO POSITIVE INSTITUTES OF CHRISTIANITY EXAMINED.

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## CHAP. I.

### *Remarks on Mr. Kinghorn's Statement of the Controversy.*

PERFECTLY concurring in opinion with Mr. Kinghorn, that it is of importance that the point in debate be fairly stated, a few remarks, designed to shew in what respects his statement is inaccurate or defective, will not be deemed irrelevant. He justly observes that the question, and the only question, is whether those who are *acknowledged to be unbaptized ought to come to the Lord's table.* After stating the sentiments of the pædobaptists, he proceeds to observe that the "baptists act on a different plan; they think that baptism ought to be administered to those only who profess repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and that it should be administered to them

on such profession by immersion. And then, and not before, they consider such persons properly qualified, according to the New Testament, for the reception of the Lord's supper." The last position, Mr. Kinghorn is aware, is not maintained by the baptists as such, but by part of them only: it may be doubted whether it be the sentiment of the majority. Why then identify the advocates of strict communion with the body, as though the abettors of a contrary practice were too inconsiderable to be mentioned, or were not entitled to be considered as baptists?

It is but just however to remark, that this disposition to enlarge the number of his partizans, is not peculiar to this writer. Mr. Booth, when engaged in defending a thesis, about which the baptists had long been divided, chose, in the same spirit, to denominate his performance *An Apology for the Baptists.**

Our author proceeds to observe, "Here arises a controversy between the two parties, not only respecting baptism, but also respecting their conduct to each other on the subject of communion." Where, let me ask, are the traces to be found of this imaginary controversy betwixt baptists and pædobaptists on that subject? That they have been often engaged in acrimonious disputes with each other on the point of baptism, is certain; but

* Who would expect to find that a book, entitled *An Apology for the Baptists*, chiefly consists of a severe reprehension of the principles and practices of a respectable part of that body?

of the history of this strange debate about terms of communion, the public are totally ignorant. What are the names of the parties engaged, and to what publications did it give birth? This author had informed us at the distance of a few lines, that the pædobaptists in general believe that none ought to come to the Lord's table who are not baptized. If this is correct, we may indeed easily conceive of their being offended with us for deeming them unbaptized; but how our refusal to admit them to communion, should become the subject of debate, is utterly mysterious. Did they, in contradiction to the fundamental laws of reasoning, attempt to persuade us to act in contradiction to the principles agreed upon by both parties? The supposition is impossible. The truth is—nor could the writer be ignorant of it—that the dispute respecting communion existed in our own denomination, and in that only.

An attempt is made to represent the advocates of mixed communion as divided among themselves, and as resting the vindication of their conduct on opposite grounds. In stating their views, Mr. Kinghorn observes, "that as their pædobaptist brethren think themselves baptized, they are willing to admit them on that ground, since they do not object to baptism itself, but only differ from others in the circumstances of the ordinance."

"Some," he adds, "lay down a still wider principle, that baptism has no connexion with church

communion; and that in forming a christian church, the question ought not to be, are these christians who wish to unite in church-fellowship *baptized,* whatever that term is considered as meaning—but are they, as far as we can judge, real christians?" *

Of this diversity in the mode of defending our practice, the writer of these pages confesses himself totally ignorant: and whatever prejudices our cause may sustain, it has not yet been injured by that which results from intestine dissension. Different modes of expression may have been adopted by different writers, but a perfect accordance of principle, a coincidence in the reasons alleged for our practice, has pervaded our apologies. We have not, like our opponents, professed to take new ground: † we have not constructed defences so totally dissimilar as the publications of a Booth and a Kinghorn, where the argument which is placed in the very front by the former, is by the latter abandoned as untenable. It is easy to perceive that the alleged disagreement in our principles is a mere phantom. While we universally maintain the nullity of infant baptism, the persuasion which our pædobaptist brethren entertain of their being baptized, can never be mistaken for baptism, and they, consequently, cannot be

* Baptism a Term of Communion, pp. 11, 12.

† "The reader, who is acquainted with the *Apology for the Baptists,* written by the late venerable Abraham Booth, will find that in the following pages I have taken ground somewhat different from his. I have adopted rather a different mode of defence."—*Baptism a Term of Communion,* p. 8.

received in the character of baptized persons. Our constant practice of administering immersion to such, on a change of sentiment, would on that supposition convict us at once of being anabaptists. It is not, then, under any idea that they have really partaken of that ordinance, more than the people called quakers, that we admit them to our communion; but in the character of sincere though mistaken christians, who have evinced, even with respect to the particular in which we deem them erroneous, no disposition to treat a christian rite with levity or neglect; and if there are those who would refuse to commune with such as reject the ordinance altogether, it is because they suspect them of such a disposition. As there can be no degrees in nothing, they are not so weak as to suppose that one class is in reality more *baptized* than the other; but one is supposed to mistake the nature of an institute, which the other avowedly neglects. In this case he who is prepared to believe that the omission of christian baptism from a notion of its not being designed for perpetuity, may consist with that deference to divine authority which is essential to a christian, will receive both without hesitation: he who is incapable of extending his candour so far, will make a distinction: he will admit the pædobaptist, while he rejects the person who purposely omits the ceremony, altogether. Whichever measure we adopt, we act on the same principle, and merely apply it with more or less extent according to the comprehension of

our charity. If we supposed there were a necessary unalterable connexion between the two positive christian institutes, so that none were qualified for communion who had not been previously baptized, we could not hesitate for a moment respecting the refusal of pædobaptists, without renouncing the principles of our denomination. On the other hand, if among such as are supposed to be equally unbaptized, we admit some and reject others, this difference must be derived, not from the consideration of baptism, but of personal character; in other words, from our supposing ourselves to possess that evidence of the piety of the party accepted, which is deficient in the other. Hence it is manifest that nothing can be more simple and intelligible than the principles on which we proceed, which are of such a nature as to preclude every other diversity of opinion, except what regards their application in particular instances.

He who mistakes the nature of a positive institute, is in a different predicament of error from him who avowedly rejects it altogether; the imperfection which claims toleration in our pædobaptist brethren, is different in its nature from that which attaches to such as are disposed to set the ordinance aside. It is very possible therefore that some may be willing to extend their indulgence to what appears to them the *least* of two errors, while they refuse toleration to the greater, and, on this ground, admit a pædobaptist, while they

scruple to receive him who does not even profess to be baptized. But in making such a distinction, no intelligent baptist would be moved by the consideration of one of these parties being baptized, and the other not, (for this would be admitting the validity of infant baptism,) but solely by the different estimate he made of the magnitude of the respective errors. Some would probably consider each of them consistent with a credible profession of christianity; others might form a less favourable judgement. In this case the parties would act differently, while they maintained the same principle, and adjusted their practice by the same rule.*

* The above remarks may enable the reader to judge of the justice with which Mr. Kinghorn asserts, or insinuates, our total disagreement respecting the fundamental principle on which we justify our practice. "Among the baptists," he says, "who plead for mixed communion, I apprehend few will be found who would fairly take Mr. Hall's principle in all its consequences. In general they palliate, and plead that many good men think themselves baptized, and they are willing to accept them on that footing, leaving it to their own consciences to decide whether they had received such baptism as the word of God required; and they will hardly admit the possibility of any case occurring which should require their acting on a wider principle. And here also, as far as my knowledge and observation have extended, I believe the cases are *very few* in which the position would be fairly and boldly adopted, that christian communion ought to be held with those who deny altogether the obligation to attend to christian baptism."—p. 15. My opportunities of knowing the sentiments of the liberal part of the baptists must be supposed to be at least equal to Mr. Kinghorn's; yet I have not heard a single objection from them against the general principle. Exceptions have been made (as might be expected) to particular parts, but none

It is somewhat extraordinary, that after stating the principle on which my Treatise on Communion was founded, Mr. Kinghorn makes his first appeal to the pædobaptists, and asks whether they are prepared to acknowledge that baptism and the Lord's supper have no connexion. To what purpose is a question referred to a class of persons, who, as far as concerns the interior regulation of their churches, have no interest in the inquiry; on whose practice it can have no influence, and who are supposed by both the parties concerned, to be in an error respecting the institution itself, which has given occasion to the discussion? The confidence with which he anticipates their favourable suffrage, appears however to be ill founded; and if the *Evangelical Magazine* for 1803 is supposed to have insinuated sentiments congenial with his own, the author of the review of the present controversy, in the same publication, distinctly and explicitly expressed his approbation of the treatise *On Terms of Communion.* I have no doubt the result of an accurate and extensive inquiry into

whatever to the fundamental position of the treatise. The reason he assigns for supposing that many would not adopt the general principle in its full extent, is inconclusive. To refuse the communion of such as denied the obligation of baptism altogether, providing that error was deemed of such magnitude as to induce a suspicion of the piety of the party, would not be to contradict the principle in the smallest degree; and I am persuaded that amongst the advocates of mixed communion the refusal would proceed on no other ground. It is one thing to reject a general principle, and another to differ about the application of it to particular cases.

the prevailing sentiments of such as adhere to infant baptism would be found opposed to his doctrine; and that such of them as might object to the admission of a member avowedly unbaptized, would be actuated by the consideration of the *magnitude of the error*, and not by the conviction of a specific and essential connexion betwixt the two ordinances in question. In other words, they would decide on the case upon principles common to the advocates of mixed communion.

His pretence for calling in such a host of disputants is that he may "clear the field," which, in my humble opinion, will be best accomplished by confining the debate within its proper limits; regarding it agreeably to its true nature, as a controversy which concerns our own denomination alone, without attempting to extort a verdict from persons who have not been placed in a situation to invite their attention to the subject. Fortunately for them, they are under no temptation to treat their fellow-christians with indignity; whether they would have maintained the stern inflexibility which is prepared to sacrifice the communion of saints to an unfounded hypothesis, must be left to conjecture. We indulge a hope that they would have hesitated long ere they admitted a doctrine which draws after it such consequences; that they would have judged of the tree by its fruits, and have discovered some better mode of signalizing their allegiance to Christ, than by the excision of his members. The tenet to which we are opposed,

produces an effect so contrary to what the genius of the gospel teaches us to anticipate, and so repugnant to the noblest feeling of the heart, as to form a presumption against it which nothing can surmount, but the utmost force and splendour of evidence. How far it is from possessing such support, or even that preponderance in the scale of argument which would produce conviction on the most trivial subject, it is the business of the following sheets to inquire.

In deciding the question, whether persons whom we deem unbaptized are entitled to approach the Lord's table, we must examine the connexion subsisting betwixt the two positive ordinances, baptism and the Lord's supper.

Our opponents contend that there is *such a connexion* betwixt these as renders them inseparable; so that he who is deemed unbaptized, is, *ipso facto*, apart from any consideration whatever of the cause of that omission, disqualified for approaching the sacred elements. *We* contend that the absence of baptism may disqualify, and that it does disqualify, wherever it appears to proceed from a criminal motive; that is, wherever its neglect is accompanied with a conviction of its divine authority. In this case we consider the piety of such a person at least doubtful; but when the omission proceeds from involuntary prejudice, or mistake, when the party evinces his conscientious adherence to known duty, by the general tenour of his conduct; we do not consider the mere absence of

baptism as a sufficient bar to communion. On this ground we cheerfully receive pious pædobaptists, not from the supposition that the ceremony which they underwent in their infancy possesses the smallest validity, but as sincere followers of Christ: and for my own part, I should feel as little hesitation in admitting such as deny the perpetuity of baptism, whenever the evidence of their piety is equally clear and decisive.

It is apparent that the whole controversy turns on the *connexion* betwixt the two positive institutes; and that in order to justify the conduct of our opponents, it is not sufficient to evince the authority or perpetuity of each, and the consequent obligation of attending to both: it is necessary to shew the dependence of one upon the other; not merely that they are both clearly and unequivocally enjoined, but that the one is prescribed with a *view to the other.*

There are two methods by which we may suppose this to be effected; either by shewing their inherent and intrinsic dependence, or by making it appear that they are connected by *positive law.* Betwixt ritual observances, it is seldom, if ever, possible to discover an inherent connexion; in the present case it will probably not be attempted. If the advocates of exclusive communion succeed, it must be in the last of these methods; it must be by proving, from express declarations of scripture, that baptism is an invariable and essential pre-requisite to communion. A Jew would have

found no difficulty in establishing this fact respecting circumcision and the passover: he would have immediately pointed to the book of Exodus, where we find an express prohibition of an uncircumcised person from partaking of the paschal lamb. Let some similar evidence be adduced on the present subject—let some declaration from scripture be exhibited which distinctly prohibits the celebration of the Lord's supper by any person who, from a misconception of its nature, has omitted the baptismal ceremony, and the controversy will be at rest. The reader can scarcely be too often reminded that this is the very hinge of the present debate, which (as appears from the title of his pamphlet) Mr. Fuller clearly perceived, however unsuccessful he may have been in establishing that fundamental position. Much that Mr. Kinghorn has advanced will be found to be totally irrelevant to the inquiry in hand; and in more instances than one, the intelligent reader will perceive him to have made concessions which are destructive of his cause. But let us proceed to a careful investigation of the arguments by which he attempts to establish the aforesaid *connexion*.

## CHAP. II.

*His Attempt to establish the Connexion contended for, from the Apostolic Commission and Primitive Precedent.*

My respectable opponent commences this branch of the argument by quoting the apostolic commission, justly remarking, that whatever may be thought of John's baptism, the ceremony enjoined in that commission must belong, in the strictest sense, to the christian dispensation. The commission is as follows:—"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. Or as it is recorded in Luke—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved." "This," Mr. Kinghorn observes, "is the *law*; the Acts of the Apostles are a commentary on that law; not leaving us to collect from mere precedents what ought to be done, but shewing us how the law was practically explained by those who perfectly understood it." He reminds us, "that in every instance where the history descends to particulars, we find they constantly adhered to this

rule; and that when they *taught*, and men believed, the apostles *baptized* them, and then further instructed them in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

We are as ready to allow as Mr. Kinghorn, that baptism was enjoined by the apostolic commission; we are perfectly agreed with him respecting the *law* of baptism, and are accustomed to explain its nature, and enforce its authority, by the same arguments as he himself would employ. We have no controversy with him, or with his party, on the subject of baptism, considered apart from the Lord's supper; and, were he disputing with such as deny its original appointment, or its perpetuity, the passages he quotes would be fully to his purpose. But, where the inquiry turns, not on the nature or obligation of baptism, but on the *necessary dependence* of another institution upon it, we are at a loss to perceive in what manner the quotation applies to the question before us. To us it is inconceivable how any thing more is deducible from the *law* of baptism, than its present and perpetual obligation. The existence of a law establishes the obligation of a correspondent duty, and nothing more. The utmost efforts of ingenuity can extort no other inference from it, than that a portion of blame attaches to such as have neglected to comply with it, variable in its degree by an infinity of circumstances, too subtle to be ascertained, and too numerous to be recited. We feel no hesitation in avowing our belief that

pædobaptists of all denominations have failed in a certain part of their duty; for this is a legitimate inference from the perpetuity of the baptismal ordinance, joined with our persuasion that we have interpreted it correctly. But if we are immediately to conclude from thence, that they are disqualified for christian communion, we must seek a church which consists of members who have failed in no branch of obedience; and must consequently despair of finding fit communicants apart from the spirits of just men made perfect. Examine the idea of *law* with the utmost rigour, turn it on all sides, and it will present nothing beyond the obligation to a certain species of conduct; so that if pædobaptists are really disqualified for the Lord's supper, it must be for some other reason than their non-compliance with a *law*, or otherwise we must insist upon the refusal of every individual who has not discharged all his obligations. To expatiate on the distinctness and solemnity with which the baptismal ceremony was enjoined, is little less than trifling, in a debate with persons who fully accede to every part of the statement, and who wish to be informed, not whether our pædobaptist brethren are in an error, but whether its moral amount, its specific nature, is such as to annul their claims to christian communion. On this point, the passages adduced maintain a profound silence.

If the practice of strict communion derives no support from the *law* of baptism, it is impossible

it should derive it from apostolical precedent; since the apostles, as this author observes, adhered constantly to the rule. They did neither more nor less than its letter enjoined: consequently, we must be mistaken, if we imagine we can infer any thing from their practice, beyond what a just and fair interpretation of its terms would suggest. If the Acts of the Apostles are, as Mr. Kinghorn asserts, "a commentary on the law, shewing us how it was practically explained," it is impossible it should contain a tittle more than is found in the text. Let us see how the apostles acted. "When they *taught* and men believed," says our author, "the apostles *baptized* them." Whom did they baptize? Undoubtedly such, and such only, as were convinced, not merely of the truth of christianity, but of the obligation of the particular rite to which they attended. This is precisely what we do. When we have reason to believe that any part of our hearers "have received the truth in the love of it," we proceed to explain the nature, and to enforce the duty, of baptism: and upon their expressing their conviction of its divine authority we baptize them. Such a previous conviction is necessary to render it "a reasonable service." We administer that rite to every description of persons whom our opponents themselves deem qualified, and withhold it under no circumstances in which the apostles would have practised it. Wherein, then, as far as that institution is concerned, does our practice differ from that of the apostles? Our

opponents will reply, that though in the administration of that rite, our conduct corresponds with the primitive pattern, yet it differs in this, that we receive the *unbaptized* to our communion, which was not done in the apostolic age. To this we rejoin, that at that period no good men entertained a doubt respecting its nature—that it was impossible they should, while it was exemplified before their eyes in the practice of the apostles and the evangelists—that he who refused to abide by the decision of inspired men, would necessarily have forfeited his claim to be considered as a christian—that a new state of things has arisen, in which, from a variety of causes, the doctrine of baptism has been involved in obscurity—that some of the best of men put a different interpretation on the language of scripture on this subject from ourselves—and that it is great presumption to claim the same deference with the apostles, and to treat those who differ from us on the sense of scripture, as though they avowedly opposed themselves to apostolic authority. To misinterpret is surely not the same thing as wilfully to contradict: and however confident we may be of the correctness of our own interpretation, to place such as are incapable of receiving it, on the same level with those who withstood the apostles, differs little, if at all, from the claim of infallibility.

We reason, as we conceive conclusively, in favour of adult, in opposition to infant, baptism:

our pædobaptist brethren avow their inability to discern the justice of our conclusion: and are they on that account to be viewed in the same light as though they intentionally rejected the decision of inspired men? What is this but to set up a claim to inspiration, or, at least, to such an infallible guidance in the explanation of scripture, as is equally exempt from the danger of error or mistake? If we examine it accurately, it amounts to more than a claim to infallibility: it implies in the pædobaptists a knowledge of this extraordinary fact. The apostles were not only inspired, and consequently infallible teachers, but were known and acknowledged to be such by the primitive christians: and, before we presume to demand an implicit acquiescence in our conclusions, and to consider ourselves entitled to treat dissentients as we suppose the opponents of the apostles would have been treated, it behoves us to evince our possession of infallibility by similar evidence. As I have not heard of our opponents making such an attempt, I cannot sufficiently express my surprise at the loftiness of their pretensions, and the arrogance of their language. In their dialect, all christians besides themselves are "*opposed* to a divine command,"* "refuse subjection to Christ, and violate the laws of his house."†

The justice of their proceeding, founded on the pretension of apostolical precedent, is perfectly congenial with its modesty. Upon the supposition

* Booth. † Kinghorn.

that a professor of christianity, in the times of the apostles, had scrupled the admission of adult baptism, could he, we would ask, in the circumstances then existing, have been considered as a good man, or a genuine convert? The reply will unquestionably be, No. "He," said St. John, "who is of God, heareth us: he who heareth not us, is not of God: hereby ye know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error."

In this case, then, it is admitted that the simple fact of rejecting adult baptism would have been sufficient to set aside a pretension to the christian character. Is it sufficient now? Are the pædobaptists to be universally considered as bad men, or, at least, as persons whose christianity is doubtful? Nothing is more distant from the avowed sentiments of our opponents. Where, then, is the justice of classing together men of the most opposite descriptions; or of inferring, that because the apostles would have refused communion to an unbaptized person, at a time when it is acknowledged that none but false professors could remain in that state, it is our duty to refuse it to some of the most excellent of the earth, merely on account of the absence of that ceremony? As it is admitted, on all hands, that baptism was then so circumstanced, that the omission of it was inconsistent with a credible profession of piety, nothing more is necessary to account for the precedent which includes it; it was the necessary result of the then state of things, and the apostles,

it is acknowledged, could not have extended their communion beyond the limits of that rite, without incorporating insincere professors. But if this reason is sufficient to account for it, it is unphilosophical and unreasonable to seek for another. The supposed inherent and inseparable connexion betwixt the two positive institutes, is another, and a totally different one, which is sufficiently excluded by the preceding reasoning.

We presume it will not be doubted that scripture precedent is founded on wisdom, that it is not arbitrary and capricious. It would betray great irreverence to suppose that men, acting under divine inspiration, were not, in every branch of their official conduct, especially in whatever related to the regulation and government of the church, moved by the strongest reasons. Hence the inquiry why they acted as they did is essential to a rational investigation into the force and authority of scripture precedent. Their proceedings were regulated by their judgement, or, rather, by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, which enlightened their minds, and directed their movements. If the *reason* for rejecting unbaptized persons in the primitive age applies to the case of pædobaptists, the argument for strict communion, derived from the practice of the apostles, is unanswerable. But if the cases are totally dissimilar—if our opponents can assign no *such reason* for excluding their christian brethren, as might justly have been urged against the admission of the unbaptized in the

times of the apostles, the argument is totally inconclusive.

It is decided, by the express declaration of our Lord, that he who refuses obedience to any part of his will, is not a christian. "Then," saith he, "are ye my disciples, if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you." But while there was no diversity of opinion on the subject, the voluntary omission of the baptismal ceremony could arise from nothing but a contumacious contempt of a divine precept, of which no sincere christian could be guilty. Here, then, we discover a sufficient reason for the matter of fact urged by our opponents, without supposing an intrinsic or invariable connexion betwixt the two ordinances. The principle of open communion would have compelled us to act precisely in the same manner as the apostles did, had we been placed in their circumstances. How vain, then, the attempt to overthrow that principle, by appealing to a precedent which is its legitimate and necessary consequence; and how unreasonable the demand which urges us to treat two cases as exactly similar, of which our opponents, equally with ourselves, are compelled to form the most opposite judgement. Let the advocates of restricted communion express the same opinion of the state and character of those whom they now regard as unbaptized, which we are certain they would feel no scruple in avowing with respect to such as had refused submission to that ordinance in primitive times, and we shall deplore

their blindness and bigotry, but shall acknowledge they reason consistently from their own premises. But we will never submit to identify two cases which agree in nothing but the omission of an external rite, while that omission arises from causes the most dissimilar, and is combined with characters the most contrary. We will not conclude, that because the apostles could not bear with those that were evil, they would have refused to tolerate the good; or that they would have comprehended, under the same censure, the contumacious opposer of their doctrines, and the myriads of holy men, whose only crime consists in mistaking their meaning in one particular.

The remarks we have already made will be deemed, we trust, a sufficient answer to the triumphant question of Mr. Kinghorn. "How is it," he asks, "that with the same rule for the guidance of the church, the ancient christians could not receive a person to communion without baptism, if the modern both can, and ought to receive him?"* The answer is obvious. If the ancient christians had received a person without baptism, they would have received a false professor; but, when we at present receive one whom we judge to be in a similar predicament, we receive a sincere, though mistaken, brother; we receive him who is of that description of christians whom we are commanded to receive.

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 29.

If it still be contended that the two cases are so parallel, that the proceeding of the apostles in this particular, is binding as a law, we would once more ask such as adopt this plea, whether they themselves form the same judgement of the present pædobaptists as the apostles would have entertained of such as continued unbaptized in their day. If they reply in the affirmative, they must consider them as insincere hypocritical professors. If they answer in the negative, since, by their own confession, they look upon the persons whom they exclude in a different light from that in which the party excluded by the apostles was considered, what becomes of the identity of the two cases? and what greater right have they to *think differently* of the state of the unbaptized from what the apostles thought, than we have for *treating* them differently? They are clamorous in their charge against us of wilful deviation from apostolic precedents. But there are precedents of thinking as well as of acting, and it is as much our duty to conform to the *sentiments* of inspired men as to their actions. The chief use, indeed, which inspired precedents are of, is to assist us to ascertain the dictates of inspiration. The conduct of enlightened, much more of inspired men, is founded on sound speculative principles. If the advocates of strict communion urge us with the inquiry—By what authority do you presume to receive a class of persons whom you acknowledge the apostles would not have received? we reply—

By what authority do you presume to deviate from the opinion of the apostles respecting that same class? Many, whom you exclude from your communion, as unbaptized, you acknowledge as christians, and, without hesitation, express your confidence of meeting them in glory. Did the apostles entertain the same judgement respecting such, in their day? Were they prepared to recognise them as brethren, and to congratulate them on their eternal prospects, while they repelled them from communion? Would they not, without hesitation, have applied to them the language which our Saviour uses, respecting such as refused to be baptized by John, whom he affirms to have "rejected the counsel of God against themselves?"

These questions admit but of one answer. Here, then, is a palpable disagreement between the sentiments of our opponents and those of the apostles, on the subject of the unbaptized; the apostles would have both rejected and condemned them: *they* reject them as members, and embrace them as brethren. Were they called upon to defend themselves from the charge of contradicting the apostles, they would begin to *distinguish* betwixt the two cases, and urge the different circumstances which accompany the omission of the same ceremony now, from what must be supposed to have accompanied it in the times of the apostles; in other words, they would attempt to shew that a new case has arisen, which necessitates them to form a correspondent judgement. They assume

the same liberty with ourselves of *thinking differently* of the state of the many who continue unbaptized in the present day, from what they are persuaded the apostles would have thought of such as had remained in that situation in theirs; and yet, with strange inconsistency, accuse us of a deviation from a divine precedent in not treating them both in the same manner; forgetting that if the cases are parallel, they themselves are guilty of an avowed and palpable contradiction to the sentiments of the apostles.

When men differ in their views of one and the same object, it will not be denied that they contradict each other. We offer them the alternative, either to deny, or to affirm, that to be unbaptized, at present, is in a moral view a very *distinct thing*, and involves very different consequences, from being in that predicament in the times of the apostles. If they deny it, they stand self-convicted of contradicting the sentiments of inspiration, by speaking of that class of persons as genuine christians, whom they cannot but acknowledge the apostles would have condemned. If they adopt the affirmative, our practice, by their own confession, is not opposed to apostolic precedent, because that precedent respects a *different thing*.

They not only depart from the precedent of the apostles, in the judgement they form of the unbaptized, but in every other branch of their conduct, with the exception of the act of communion. On all other occasions they treat as brethren, and

frequently, and that much to their honour, cultivate an intimate friendship with persons whom they deem to be destitute of that rite, the omission of which, in the apostolic age, would have incurred the sentence of wilful impiety and disobedience. What, we ask, is more opposite to primitive precedent, than the practice of including the same persons within the obligations of christian love and friendship whom they prohibit from communion; of inviting them into the pulpit, and repelling them from the table; uniting with them in the most retired and elevated exercises of devotion, and excluding them from the church? It is scarcely in the power of imagination to feign a species of conduct more diametrically opposite to all the examples of scripture; and when they have reconciled these, and many similar usages, with the practice of the primitive age, they will have supplied us with a sufficient apology for our pretended deviation from the same standard.

It will probably be thought enough has been already said to demonstrate the futility of the argument founded on original precedent: but as this is considered by our opponents in general, as well as by Mr. Kinghorn in particular, as the main prop of their cause, we must be permitted to detain the reader a little longer, while we enter on a closer examination of his reasoning.

In order to shew that baptism is a necessary term of communion, he labours hard to prove that it is a term of *profession*. "It is obvious,"

he says, "that their baptism (that of believers) was the term of professing their faith by the special appointment of the Lord himself." To the same purpose he afterwards adds, "the fact still exists that it pleased the Lord to make a visible and ritual observance, the appointed evidence of our believing on him. If obedience to a rite be not a term of salvation, (which no one supposes,) yet it was ordered by the highest authority, as an evidence of our subjection to the Author of salvation: and a christian profession is not made in *Christ's own way without it.*" Recurring to the same topic,* he observes, "Whatever may be the conditions of salvation, a plain question here occurs, which is—*Ought the terms of christian communion to be different from those of christian profession?* The only answer which one would think could be given to this question would be, no: christian communion must require *whatever the Lord required as a mark of christian profession.*"

It is hoped the reader will excuse my accumulating quotations to the same purport, which would have been avoided, were it not evident that the writer considered this as his strong-hold, to which he repairs with a confidence which bespeaks his conviction of its being impregnable. We will venture, however, to come close to these frowning battlements; we will make trial of their strength, that it may be seen whether their power of resistance is equal to their formidable aspect. We

* Page 20.

freely acknowledge that if the *principle* can be established that baptism is *invariably* essential to a christian profession, the cause we are pleading must be abandoned, being confident that a true profession of the christian religion is inseparable from church communion.

Previous to entering on this discussion, it will be necessary to premise that the words *profession* and *confession*, together with their correlates, are usually denoted by one and the same word in the original, and that they are evidently used by the authors of the received translation as synonymous.* Hence, whatever is affirmed in the New Testament respecting the *confession* of Christ, or of his sayings, may without hesitation be considered as predicated of a *profession;* since, whatever difference may subsist in the popular meaning of the words, whenever they occur in scripture, they are merely different renderings of the same term.†

* The word in the original is ὁμολογία, derived from ὁμολογέω, a verb of the same import.

† See Matt. x. 32. Luke xii. 8. Matt. vii. 23. John ix. 22. John xii. 42. Acts xxiii. 8. xxiv. 14. Rom. x. 9, 10. 1 John iv. 15. 2 John 7. Rev. iii. 5. 1 Tim. vi. 13. τὴν καλὴν ὁμολογίαν, a good profession, English Translation.—Heb. iii. 1. τῆς ὁμολογίας ἡμῶν, of our profession, E. T.—Heb. iv. 14. τῆς ὁμολογίας ἡμῶν, our profession, E. T.—Heb. x. 23. τὴν ὁμολογίαν τῆς ἐλπίδος ἀκλινῆ, the profession of our faith without wavering.—Matt. vii. 23. τοτε ὁμολογήσω αὐτοῖς, then will I profess unto them. In each of the preceding passages the same word, under different inflections, is employed, and they contain all the passages which relate to the absolute necessity of a religious profession.

Now, that the profession of Christ is an indispensable term of salvation, is so undeniably evident from the New Testament, that to attempt to prove it, seems like an insult on the understanding of the reader. I must crave his indulgence, however, for recalling to his recollection a very few passages, which will set the matter beyond dispute. "Whoever," said our Lord, "shall confess (or *profess*) my name before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven: and whoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."—Matt. x. 32. The same language occurs, with little variation, in the gospel of St. Luke, xii. 8. In these words we find an awful denunciation of the rejection of every one, without exception, who shall be found to have denied Christ; and as this denial is immediately opposed to *confessing* him, it must necessarily attach to all such as have not made a confession. If a medium could be supposed betwixt the denial and the open assertion of the doctrine of Christ, it is precluded by the following sentence:—"Whoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels."—Luke ix. 26. Thence we may with certainty conclude, that from whatever motives a profession of christianity is omitted or declined, eternal perdition is the consequence. Nor is this the doctrine of the evangelists only: it is repeatedly asserted, and uniformly

implied, in the writings of the apostles. "If thou shalt confess (or *profess*) with thy mouth," saith St. Paul, "the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession (or *profession*) is made unto salvation." Rom. x. 9. We find the same writer on another occasion exhorting christians to hold fast the *profession* of their faith without wavering, when the previous possession of that is necessarily supposed, a firm adherence to which is inculcated as essential to salvation. "Let us hold fast the *profession* of our faith without wavering."—Heb. x. 23. It is to the faithful, considered as such, without distinction of sects and parties, that St. Paul addresses the following exhortation: "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our *profession*, Christ Jesus."—Heb. iii. 1. In the Epistle to the Hebrews alone, the phrase *our profession* occurs three times, and in each instance in such a connexion as demonstrates it to be an attribute common to all christians.*

It would be trifling with the reader's patience to multiply proofs of a position so evident from scripture, as the inseparable connexion betwixt a genuine profession of Christ, and future salvation. But if this be admitted, what becomes of the principal argument urged by Mr. Kinghorn for

* Heb. iii. 1; iv. 14; x. 13.

strict communion, which turns on the principle that "baptism is the term of christian profession?" Who can fail to perceive that if this proposition is true, the pædobaptists are, on our principles, cut off from the hope of eternal life, and salvation is confined to ourselves? The language of our Saviour and his apostles is decisive respecting the necessity of a *profession* in order to eternal life: this writer affirms that baptism, as we practise it, is an essential term of profession. By comparing these propositions together, a child will perceive that the necessary inference is the restriction of the hope of future happiness to members of our own denomination. This, in truth, is the conclusion to which all his reasoning tends; it meets the intelligent reader at every turn; but when he expects the writer to advance forward and press the fearful consequence, he turns aside, and is afraid to push his argument to its proper issue. He travails in birth, but dares not bring forth; he shrinks from the sight of his own progeny. Sometimes he seems at the very point of disclosing the full tendency of his speculations, and more than once suggests hints in the form of questions which possess no meaning, but on the supposition of that dismal conclusion to which his hypothesis conducts him. Let the reader pause, and meditate on the following extraordinary passage:—"If baptism," he says, "was once necessary to communion, either it was then essential to salvation, or that which was *not* essential to salvation, *was* necessary

to communion. If it was *then* essential to salvation, how can it be proved not to be essential now?"* Again, he asks, "What is the meaning of the term condition? In whatever sense the term can apply to the commission of our Lord, or to the declarations of the apostles *respecting repentance, faith, and baptism;* is not baptism a condition either of communion, or of salvation, or of both? Do the conditions either of salvation, or of communion, change by time? Are they annulled by being misunderstood?"†

Whatever of argument these passages may be supposed to contain, will be examined hereafter; the design of producing them at present is to shew the tendency of the principle; and the reader is requested to consider whether they are susceptible of any other sense, than that the terms of salvation and of communion are commensurate with each other; that whatever was once essential to salvation, is so still; and that baptism is as much a condition of salvation, as faith and repentance. But if these are his real sentiments, why not speak plainly, instead of "uttering parables?" and why mingle, in the same publication, representations totally repugnant, in which he speaks of such as dissent from him on the subject of baptism, as persons of the most distinguished character—persons whom God will undoubtedly bring to his kingdom and glory? ‡ The only solution this

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 19.

† Ibid. p. 20. ‡ Ibid. pp. 21, 36.

problem admits, is to suppose, (what my knowledge of his character confirms,) that to the first part of these statements he was impelled by the current of his arguments; to the latter, by the dictates of his heart. But however that heart may rebel, he must learn either to subdue its contumacy, or consent to relinquish the principal points of his defence. He has stated that the limits of communion must be the same with those of profession; that the pædobaptists have none, or, at least, none that is valid; and that, on *this* account, and for *this* reason, they are precluded from a title to christian fellowship. But the word of God, as we have seen, repeatedly insists on men's professing Christ as an indispensable requisite to salvation. How is it possible, then, if Mr. Kinghorn's position is just, to evade the consequence, that those whom he would exclude from communion, are excluded from salvation?

"If obedience to a *rite*," he observes, "be not a term of salvation, (which no one supposes,) yet it was ordered, by the highest authority, as an evidence of our subjection to the Author of salvation; and a christian profession is not made in Christ's *own way without it.*"* If the open acknowledgement of Christ by the pædobaptists is not to be esteemed a *real* and *valid* profession, the inevitable consequence is, for reasons sufficiently explained, that they cannot be saved; but if it is *valid*, (however imperfect in one particular,) it is

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 18.

so far made in Christ's *own way*. The expression which he employs to depreciate it, has either no meaning, or none that is relative to the object of the writer. The scope of his argument obliged him to prove that adult baptism is essential to a christian *profession;* he now contents himself with saying, that, without that ordinance, it is not made in the right way, which may, with equal propriety, be affirmed of every deviation from the doctrine and precepts of the gospel. Just as far as we suppose a person to depart from these, we must judge his profession not to be made in *Christ's own way;* nor will any thing short of a *perfect* profession, or, in other words, a perfect comprehension and exhibition of the will of Christ, exempt him from such an imputation; so that in this sense, which is the only one applicable to the case before us, to make a profession of the christian religion in *Christ's own way,* is not the lot of a mortal. But though this is the only interpretation consistent with truth, we cannot for a moment suppose that such was the meaning of the writer. He must have intended to assert that the parties, to whom they are applied, fail to make what *Christ himself* would deem a profession. This supposition is forced upon us by the scope of his reasoning, which went to prove that baptism is necessary to communion, *because* it is necessary to a profession. This supposed necessity must consequently relate, not to its *completeness,* or *perfection,* but to its *essence:* he must be understood

to affirm, that they have not exhibited what Christ will consider as a profession. But as *he* has solemnly affirmed his determination to reject such as are destitute of it, we ask again, how Mr. Kinghorn will reconcile this with the salvability of pædobaptists?

Whatever it seems good to infinite wisdom to prescribe as an indispensable condition of future happiness, we must suppose that it exactly corresponds to its name: it is true and genuine in its kind, and wants nothing which constitutes the essence. If an open acknowledgement of Christ is the prerequisite demanded under the title of a profession, it would seem strange to assert that something less than what is correctly denoted by that expression, is, after all, sufficient to satisfy the condition. This, however, is what Mr. Kinghorn must assert, to be consistent with himself; for he will not deny that the advocates of infant sprinkling have exhibited something *like a profession;* but as they have not made it in *Christ's own way,* it is not, strictly speaking, entitled to that appellation, and, consequently, cannot claim the privileges it secures. But if the case is as he states it, he must either confine the hope of salvation to his own party, or admit that, in the solemn denunciations before recited, it is not *really* a profession of Christ which is required, but merely something which resembles it. Whether the use of language so replete with ambiguity, or collusion, is consistent with the character of the "true and

faithful witness," we leave to the decision of the reader. According to Mr. Kinghorn, while there are two modes of avowing our christianity, one so essentially defective as not to deserve the name of a *profession,* the other sound and valid; when the Supreme Legislator thought fit to enjoin the profession of his name, under the sanction of eternal death, he intended to insist on the first, in distinction from the last, of these methods. Let him who is able, digest these absurdities; from which, whoever would escape must either abandon the ground which Mr. Kinghorn has taken, or consign the pædobaptists to destruction.

But it is time to recur to the questions with which he has urged his opponents, and which he supposes it impossible to solve on my principles. "If baptism," he observes, "was *once* necessary to communion, either it was then essential to salvation, or that which was *not* essential to salvation was necessary to communion. If it was *then* essential to salvation, how can it be proved not to be essential *now?* If it be argued that it was not essential to salvation *then,* it must either be proved that communion was held without it, or Mr. Hall's position must fall."*

Of the preceding dilemma, I embrace without hesitation the affirmative side, and assert that in the apostolic age, baptism *was* necessary to salvation. To the query which follows, how then can it be proved "that it is not essential now," I

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 19.

reply that it is unnecessary to attempt it, because it is admitted by Mr. Kinghorn himself; and it is preposterous to attempt the proof of what is acknowledged by both parties. It is very astonishing, after he had so clearly avowed his conviction of the exalted character, and unquestionable piety of many pædobaptists, that he should ask the question: but he was probably so dazzled with the seeming subtlety and acumen of these pointed interrogatories, as not to perceive their total irrelevance. If he feels any hesitation in affirming that baptism was essential to salvation in primitive times, he entertains a lower idea of its importance than his opponents; but, on the contrary supposition, unless he totally retracts his liberal concessions, he must acknowledge that which was *once* necessary to salvation is not so now. The difficulty attending the supposition of a change in the terms of salvation, is urged with little propriety by one to whose hypothesis they apply in their full force; nor are they, when fairly examined, at all formidable. Owing to the incurable ambiguity of language, many truths founded on the clearest evidence, assume an appearance of paradox; and of this nature is the proposition which affirms that the terms of salvation are not unalterable: which may, with equal propriety, be affirmed or denied, in different senses. Since the *fundamental laws* of the kingdom of God are of equal and invariable obligation, a cordial compliance with which is essential to eternal felicity—since faith

and repentance are at all times, and in all places, indispensable prerequisites to a justified state; in popular language, there would be no impropriety in asserting that the conditions of salvation, under the gospel, remain the same from age to age.

But if this proposition is taken in its utmost rigour, and applied to every particular, connected with the faith and practice of christians, it is manifestly false. There are certain parts of christianity, which, as they exhibit the basis, and propound the conditions, of the new covenant, belong to its essence; certain doctrines which are revealed because they are necessary; and others, which are necessary, only because they are revealed: the absence of which impairs its beauty, without destroying its being. Of this nature are its few and simple ceremonies. But while this distinction is admitted, it will not be denied that the wilful perversion of the least of Christ's precepts, or the deliberate and voluntary rejection of his instructions in the smallest instance, would betray an insincerity utterly inconsistent with the christian character. "He who shall break the least of these my commandments, and teach men so, he shall be of no esteem in the kingdom of heaven."* The truth or precept in question may be of such an order, that a simple ignorance of it may not be fatal, yet to resist it, *knowing* it to be of divine authority, would be pregnant with the highest danger. The great Head of the Church will not permit

* See Campbell's Translation, Matt. v. 19.

us to set voluntary limits to our obedience: we must consent to receive all his sayings, or none. But it must be manifest, on reflection, that on its first publication, the visible *appendages* of christianity were exhibited with a lustre of evidence which no honest mind could withstand; and that no pretence for their neglect could subsist among such as professed religious integrity. Such was eminently the case with the two institutions which have occasioned the present controversy. The constant practice of the apostles appealing to the senses of men, and illustrating the import of their oral instruction, made the point of duty so plain, that its omission, in such circumstances, could be ascribed only to voluntary corruption.

Nor is this the only example which might be adduced. By orthodox christians the explicit belief of the doctrine of the atonement is now considered as indispensably necessary to salvation; but that the immediate followers of Christ were, during his personal ministry, so far from embracing this truth, that they could not endure the mention of his death, without expressing the utmost impatience, and that they knew not what was intended by his resurrection, are undeniable facts. The full developement of the gospel scheme, made at a subsequent period, has in this instance rendered that essential to salvation which could previously subsist without it.

It may also be observed, that a diversity of sentiment has arisen among christians, from different modes of interpreting the word of God, which has

given birth to various sects and parties, unknown in primitive times. On many of these points, it is impossible to suppose but that the sentiments of the inspired writers were expressed with sufficient perspicuity to be perfectly understood by the parties to whom they were originally communicated; and who, having repeatedly attended their ministry, had heard those particulars more fully illustrated and confirmed, which are briefly touched upon in their writings. Who can doubt that the true idea of election, whether it intends, as the arminians assert, the distinction conferred on some, above others, in the collation of external benefits, or the preordination of individuals to eternal life, was clearly ascertained by the primitive christians, so as to exclude the possibility of controversy and debate? The arminian will contend that the first christians entertained his notion of election and grace: the calvinist, with equal confidence, will maintain that the true and primitive interpretation of scripture is in favour of his hypothesis; and neither of them can consistently admit that the members of the primitive church adopted a different system from that which they respectively embrace. One of the parties will contend that the apostolic church consisted entirely of arminians; the other that it included none but calvinists.

Were it allowed that *some* variety of opinion on this mysterious topic, might subsist even amongst the earliest converts, it is impossible to suppose there were none at that period who understood the

doctrine of St. Paul: it would be most injurious to the reputation of that great writer to suppose he expressed himself with an obscurity which uniformly baffled the power of comprehension. Let his meaning, for argument's sake, be supposed to agree with the arminian system; the adoption of that hypothesis was, on this supposition, essential to the salvation of him who was acquainted with that circumstance. For such a person to have embraced the calvinistic sentiments, would have been to pour contempt on the apostolic doctrine, and to oppose his private judgment to the dictates of inspiration. If we invert the supposition, the result is a similar conclusion in favour of the calvinist. Were these parties to exclude each other from communion, under pretence that the primitive christians were all calvinists, or all arminians; were the calvinist to assert that he dares not sanction so serious a departure from truth, as the denial of election, and that to receive such as were erroneous in this point, would be to admit a class of persons who had no existence in the primitive church, he would argue precisely in the same manner as Mr. Kinghorn. How would our author repel this reasoning, or justify a more liberal conduct? He certainly would not allege the original *obscurity* of the apostolic injunctions, and the possibility of primitive converts mistaking their meaning: he would unquestionably insist on the different degrees of importance attached to revealed truths, and the palpable difference betwixt mistaking

the meaning, and avowedly opposing the inspired writers. But this is precisely our mode of defence.

When a dispute arose on the obligation of extending the rite of circumcision to the Gentiles, a council, consisting of the apostles and elders, was assembled to determine the question. Their decision was, that the Gentiles should no longer be troubled on that head, but that they should be strictly enjoined, among other things, carefully to abstain from things strangled, and from blood. It is universally acknowledged that it was the design of this injunction to prohibit the use of blood in food. This precept was enjoined expressly on the Gentiles, without the slightest intimation of its being of temporary duration; nor did it commence with the Jewish dispensation, but was in force from the period of the deluge. I have not the smallest doubt that it is of perpetual force, however little it may be regarded in modern practice; and were the observation of it proposed as a term of communion, I am not aware of a single argument adduced by our opponents for their narrow exclusive system, which might not with superior advantage be alleged in favour of such a regulation. If it be urged that there never was a period when it was not the duty of believers in Christ to be baptized, it may be asserted with equal confidence that the precept of abstaining from blood was invariably observed by the faithful from the time of Noah. If it be urged that the primitive church consisted exclusively of

such as were baptized, it is equally certain that it consisted only of such as abstained from blood. That it was "once a term of communion" none will deny: "how then comes it to cease to be such?" In this case there is no room to allege a misapprehension of the meaning of the precept: it is susceptible but of one interpretation; and if the terms of communion are not "annulled by being misunderstood,"* much less when there is no such pretence. The only perceptible difference in the two cases is, that the precept respecting blood was not promulgated by the Saviour himself; but it resulted from the solemn and unanimous decision of his apostles, and is of more ancient origin than any other christian institute. If our opponents attempt to depreciate its importance by asserting that it is merely ritual and ceremonial, so is baptism; and as they were both enjoined by the same authority, both universally maintained in the primitive church, if the absence of one of these observances constitutes a church of *different materials*, so must the neglect of the other.

Such as violate the abstinence in question will not pretend that they observe the prohibition: they satisfy themselves with asserting their conviction, (a conviction not sustained by a syllable of scripture,) that it is only of temporary obligation; and as pædobaptists profess their conscientious adherence to the baptismal precept, which they merely demand the right of inter-

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 20.

preting for themselves, upon what principle is it that a mistake in the meaning of a positive injunction, is deemed more criminal than its avowed neglect? or why should an error of judgement, which equally affects the practice in both cases, be tolerated in one, and made the ground of exclusion in the other? This reasoning, it is acknowledged, bears with the greatest weight on such as conceive the prohibition of blood to be still in force; who, if they adopt the principle of Mr. Kinghorn, ought, to be consistent, immediately to separate themselves from such as are of a contrary judgement. The same argument equally applies to laying on of hands after ordination and baptism. It is acknowledged that this rite was universally practised in the primitive times, that it claims the sanction of apostolic example, and it is enumerated by St. Paul amongst the *first principles* of christian doctrine. Wherever that practice is laid aside, it may with equal truth be affirmed, that the church consists of *different materials* from those admitted by the apostles; and it may be asked with an air of triumph, in the words of this writer, by what authority we presume "to make a scriptural rite of less consequence in the church of Christ than it was once?"*

Thus much may suffice for the vindication of our pretended departure from ancient usage and apostolic precedent. But as this topic is supposed to include the very pith and marrow of my

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 92.

opponent's cause, the reader must excuse my replying to some other parts of his reasoning. Confident of the soundness of our principles, it is my anxious wish that nothing may pass unnoticed that wears the shadow of argument; and that no suspicion be afforded of a desire to shrink from any part of the contest.

"If an obedience to a rite," says our author, "be not a term of salvation, (which no one supposes,) yet it was ordered by the highest authority, as an *evidence* of subjection to the Author of salvation."* He repeatedly asserts that it was prescribed as an *evidence* of faith in him. In another place he styles it, "the appointed *evidence* of our putting on Jesus Christ," and affirms that "the church of Christ, acting upon the rule he has laid down, cannot recognise *any person* as his disciple who is not baptized in his name."†

Let us first ascertain the precise meaning of these remarkable passages. He cannot be supposed to assert that baptism is *of itself* a sufficient evidence of saving faith: Simon Magus was baptized, who had "no part or lot in the matter." His meaning must be, that the ordinance in question forms a necessary *part* of the evidence of faith, insomuch that in the absence of it, our Lord intended no other should be deemed valid. That this was the case in the primitive age, we feel no hesitation in affirming; we have also shewn at

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 18.

† Ibid. p. 140.

large the reason on which that conclusion is founded. But in no part of scripture is there the slightest intimation that it was more *specifically* intended as the test of faith, than compliance with any other part of the mind of Christ; or that it was *in any other sense* an evidence of the existence of that attainment, than as it was necessary to evince the possession of christian sincerity. Thus much we are most willing to concede, but are at a loss to know what is gained by it, unless our opponent could demonstrate that it occupies the same place at present, and that it is still necessary to constitute a valid evidence of faith in the Redeemer. If this is what he means to assert, (and nothing beside has the least relation to his argument,) how will he reconcile it with the confidence he so often expresses of the piety of the pædobaptists? His objection to their communion, he elsewhere informs us, "does not arise from suspicions attaching to their christian character,"* to which he trusts he is always willing to render ample justice. He has no suspicion of the piety of those who are destitute of that which Jesus Christ prescribed as *the evidence* of faith, and whom he affirms "it is impossible for the church, acting on the rule which he has laid down, to recognise as his disciples." I am at a loss to conceive of a more palpable contradiction.

If there be any meaning in terms, the word evidence means that by which the truth of a fact

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 67.

or a proposition is made manifest, and the absence of which induces either hesitation or denial. Its place in the intellectual world corresponds to light in the natural; and it is just as conceivable how an object can be beheld without light, as how a fact can be ascertained without evidence. Mr. Kinghorn, it seems, however, has contrived to solve the problem; for while he affirms that the patrons of infant baptism are destitute of that which Infinite Wisdom has prescribed as the evidence of faith, and by which we are to recognise his disciples, he expresses as firm a conviction of their piety as though they possessed it in the utmost perfection. Let me ask on what is his conviction founded:—will he say upon evidence? But he assigns as a reason for refusing their fellowship, that they are destitute of that which Christ prescribed for that purpose. Will he distinguish betwixt that private evidence which satisfies his own mind, and the sort of evidence which Christ has demanded and enjoined? But what unheard-of presumption to oppose his private judgement to the dictates of Heaven; and, while the Head of the church has appointed the performance of a certain ceremony to be the invariable criterion of discipleship, to pretend, in its absence, to ascertain it by another medium! To attempt to prove that every thing really is what God has appointed it, and that Infinite Wisdom, where figurative language is excluded, calls things by their proper names, would be to insult the understanding of the reader. If

compliance with adult baptism is, in every age, the appointed *evidence* of faith in Christ, it undoubtedly *is* what it pretends to be: and to ascribe faith to such as are destitute of it, is a sort of impiety.

"No church," he assures us, "acting agreeably to the rules of Christ, can recognise them as his disciples."* What strange magic lies concealed in the word church! This writer, in a multitude of places, makes no scruple of avowing his attachment to the members of other denominations; he even anxiously guards against the supposition of his indulging a thought to the prejudice of their piety; and the sentiments which he entertains himself, he must be supposed to recommend to the adoption of his brethren. In his individual character, he feels no objection to *recognise* them to the full as christians; nay, he expresses the sentiments of recognition in a studied variety of phrase: but the moment he conceives himself in a church, his tone is altered, and he feels himself compelled to treat them as strangers and foreigners. Why this contradiction betwixt the language of the individual, and the language of the church? If they *are* christians, why should the knowledge of the fact be suppressed there? We are taught by St. Paul to consider the church as the pillar and ground of the truth; where she is supposed to exhibit, as in a focus, the light and love which actuate her respective members; and instead of

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 140.

dissonance betwixt her public principles and the private sentiments of her members, we naturally look for a perfect harmony, or rather, for a more illustrious exhibition of what every one thinks and feels apart—for a great and combined movement of charity, corresponding to her more silent and secret inspirations. But we are doomed to anticipate it in vain; for while the advocates of strict communion are shocked at the idea of suspecting the piety of their pædobaptist brethren, they contend it would be criminal to recognise it in the church. What mysterious place is this, in which we are forbidden to acknowledge a truth proclaimed without scruple every where else; which possesses the property of darkening every object inclosed within its limits, and of rendering christians invisible and impalpable to each other! In the broad day-light of the world, notwithstanding their minor differences, they are recognised with facility; but the moment we enter the sombrous gloom of a baptist church, we are lost from each other's view; and, like those who visited the cave of Triphonius, return pale, dejected, and bewildered. Of such societies we might be almost tempted to exclaim—"My soul, come not thou into their secret, and to their assembly be not thou united!" Shocked as we are at such illiberality, we suppress the emotions which naturally arise on the occasion, remembering (strange as it may seem) how often it is associated with talents the most respectable, and piety the most fervent.

## CHAP. III.

*The supposed necessary Connexion betwixt the two positive Institutes farther discussed, wherein other Arguments are examined.*

THE reader can scarcely be too often reminded that the present controversy turns *entirely* on the supposed necessary connexion betwixt the two positive christian institutes; the recollection of which will at once convince him of the total *irrelevancy* of much which it has been customary to urge on the subject. Our opponents frequently reason in such a manner as would lead the reader to suppose we were aiming to set aside adult baptism. Thus they insist on the clearness with which it is enjoined and exemplified in the sacred volume, contend for its perpetuity, and represent us as depreciating its value, and dispensing with its obligation; topics which might be introduced with propriety in a dispute with the people called Quakers, or with the followers of Mr. Emlyn, but are perfectly irrelevant to the present inquiry. It surely requires but little attention to perceive that it is one thing to *tolerate*, and another to sanction; that to affirm that each of the positive

rites of religion ought to be attended to, and that they are so *related,* that a mistake respecting one instantly disqualifies for another, are not the same propositions. An attention to that distinction would have incredibly shortened the present debate, and shewn the futility of much unmeaning declamation, and even of much unanswerable argument. We wish, if possible, to put an end to this σκιομαχια, this fighting with shadows and beating the air, and to confine the discussion to the *real question,* which is, whether the two positive ordinances of the New Testament are so *related to each other,* either in the nature of things, or by express command, that he whom we deem not baptized, is, *ipso facto,* or from that circumstance alone, disqualified for an attendance at the Lord's table. This, and this only, is the question in which we are concerned.

That there is not a necessary *connexion,* in the nature of things, betwixt the two rites, appears from the slightest attention to their nature. It will not be pretended that the Lord's supper is *founded* on baptism, or that it recognises a single circumstance belonging to it; nor will it be asserted to be a less reasonable service, or less capable of answering the design of its appointment, when attended to by a pædobaptist, than by persons of our own persuasion. The event which it "shews forth," is one in which all denominations are equally interested; the sacrifice

which it exhibits is an oblation of whose benefits they equally partake; and so little affinity does it bear to baptism, considered as a ceremony, that the most profound consideration of it will not suggest the idea of that rite. As far as reason is capable of investigating the matter, they appear *separate* ceremonies, no otherwise related than as they emanate from the same source, and are prescribed to the same description of persons. In a word, judging from the reason of the case, we should not for a moment suspect that the obligation of commemorating the Saviour's death depended upon baptism: we should ascribe it at once to the injunction—"Do this in remembrance of me." Since positive duties arise (to human apprehension at least) from the mere will of the legislator, and not from immutable relations, their nature forbids the attempt to establish their inherent and essential connexion. In the present case it is sufficient for us to know, that whatever God has thought fit to enjoin, must be matter of duty; and it little becomes weak and finite mortals to limit its sphere, or explain away its obligation, by refined and subtle distinctions.

It remains to be considered whether the *necessary connexion* we are seeking, can be found in positive prescription. We, again and again, call upon our opponents to shew us the passage of scripture which asserts that dependence of the Lord's supper on baptism, which their theory

supposes; and here, when we ask for bread, they give us a stone. They quote Christ's commission to his apostles, where there is not a word upon the subject, and which is so remote from establishing the essential *connexion* of the two ceremonies, that the mention of one of them only is included. They urge the conduct of the apostles, though it is not only sufficiently accounted for on our principles, but is such as those *very principles* would, in their circumstances, have absolutely compelled us to adopt; and surely that must be a very cogent proof that the apostles were of their sentiments, which is derived from a matter of fact, which would undeniably have been just what it is, on the contrary supposition. They baptized, because they were commanded to do so; they administered the Lord's supper, because our Saviour enjoined it on his disciples; and both these duties were prescribed to the societies they formed, because the nature and obligation of each were equally and perfectly understood. What is there in this, we ask, which our hypothesis forbids us to imitate, or which, had we been in their place, our views would not have obliged us to adopt?

The late excellent Mr. Fuller, whose memory commands profound veneration, attempts in his posthumous tract on this subject, to establish the connexion betwixt the two rites, by the joint allusion made to them in the epistles of St. Paul.

From their being *connected together* in his mind, on those occasions, he infers an inherent and essential connexion. With this view, he adduces the tenth chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians, which asserts that the ancient Israelites had a figurative baptism "in the cloud, and in the sea, and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that rock which followed them, and that rock was Christ." "If the apostle," he remarks, "had not connected baptism and the Lord's supper together in his mind, how came he so pointedly to allude to them both in this passage?" He brings forward, also, another text to the same purpose, where St. Paul affirms we are all "baptized into one body, and are all made to drink into the same spirit." It is freely admitted that these, and perhaps other texts which might be adduced, afford examples of an allusion to the two ordinances at the same time, whence we may be certain that they were present together in the mind of the writer. But whoever considers the laws of association, must be aware how trivial a circumstance is sufficient to unite together in the mind, ideas of objects among which no essential relation subsists. The mere coincidence of time and place is abundantly sufficient for that purpose. In addressing a class of persons distinguished by the possession of peculiar privileges, what more natural than to combine them in a joint allusion,

without intending to assert their relation or dependence; just as in addressing a British audience on a political occasion, the speaker may easily be supposed to remind them, at the same time, of their popular representation, of the liberty of the press, and the trial by jury, without meaning to affirm that they are incapable of being possessed apart. In fact, the warmest advocates of *our* practice would feel no sort of difficulty in adopting the same style, in an epistle to a church which consisted only of baptists; consequently, nothing more can be inferred, than that the societies which St. Paul addressed were universally of that description: a fact we have already fully conceded. The only light in which it bears upon the subject is that which makes it perfectly coincide with the argument from primitive precedent, the futility of which has been sufficiently demonstrated.

The *unities* which the apostle enumerates as belonging to christians, in his epistle to the Ephesians, are also set in opposition to us. "There is," saith he, "one body and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." That this text is irrelevant to the present argument, will appear from the following considerations: Since no mention is made of the Lord's supper, it cannot be intended to confirm, or illustrate, the relation which baptism bears to

that ordinance, which is the only point in dispute. Next, it is very uncertain whether the apostle refers to water baptism, or to the baptism of the Spirit; but, admitting that he intends the former, he asserts no more than we firmly believe, that there are not two or more valid baptisms under the christian dispensation, but *one* only; a deviation from which, either with respect to the subject, or the mode, reduces it to a nullity. Lastly, since his avowed object in insisting upon these *unities*, was to persuade his reader to maintain inviolate that unity of the Spirit to which they were all subservient, it is extremely unreasonable to adduce this passage in defence of a practice which involves its subversion. "The same fountain," St. James tells us, "cannot send forth sweet water and bitter:" but here we see an attempt to deduce discord from harmony; and to find an apology for dividing the mystical body of Christ, in the most pathetic persuasive to unity. The celebrated Whitby, a pædobaptist and an episcopalian, appears to have felt the full force of this admirable passage, when he deduces from it the three following propositions: 1st. "That sincere christians only, are truly members of that church catholic, of which Christ is the Head. 2dly. That nothing can join any professor of christianity to this one body, but the participation of the spirit of Christ. 3dly. *That no error in judgement, or mistake in practice, which doth not*

*tend to deprive a christian of the spirit of Christ, can separate him from the church of Christ.*"* Thus it is, that this learned commentator conceives himself to have discovered a demonstration of the principles we are abetting, in the very words our opponents urge for their overthrow.

Such is the substance of Mr. Fuller's argumentation on the subject; and on a basis so slight, did he attempt to rear the edifice of strict communion. In how different a light will he be viewed by posterity, as the victorious impugner of socinian and deistical impiety! and who, on looking back on his achievements in that field, and comparing them with his feeble efforts in the present, but must exclaim with regret, *quantum mutatus ab illo!* Whether he felt some distrust of the ground he was treading, which for several reasons I strongly suspect; or whether it is to be ascribed to the infelicity of the subject, it is not easy to say; but his posthumous pamphlet on communion, will unquestionably be considered as the feeblest of all his productions. The worthy editor probably calculated on great effects to arise from the dying suffrage of a man so highly esteemed; but before he ventured on a step so injurious to his fame, he should have remembered, that we live in an age not remarkably disposed to implicit faith, even in the greatest names.

* Whitby *in loco.*

But it is time to return to Mr. Kinghorn, with whose management of the subject we are at present more immediately concerned. As bold a polemic as Mr. Fuller was generally considered, he was pusillanimity itself compared to my present antagonist; who, in the ardour of combat, has not scrupled to remove land-marks which *he*, I am well persuaded, would have considered as sacred. It cannot be denied that he has infused by these means some novelty into the discussion, and that many of his arguments bear an original stamp; but whether that novelty is combined with truth, or that originality is such as will ultimately secure many imitators, or admirers, is another question.

Having already shewn that no *inherent* connexion subsists betwixt the two *rites* under discussion, it remains to be considered, as we have already remarked, whether they are connected by *positive* law. Is there a single word in the New Testament, which, fairly interpreted, can be regarded as a *prohibition* of the admission of unbaptized persons to the Lord's supper?

Let Mr. Kinghorn answer this question for us: "*The New Testament,*" he tells us, "*does not prohibit the unbaptized from receiving the Lord's supper,* because no circumstance arose which rendered such prohibition necessary."* Whether a

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 32.

prohibition was necessary or not, involves a distinct inquiry; we request the reader's attention to the important concession, that *it does not exist.* The reason he assigns, however, for its not being necessary is, that "it is acknowledged the law of baptism was clearly understood, and that the unbaptized could not be received into the church." "There was *therefore,*" he adds, "no reason why a prohibitory declaration should exist." We fully agree with him, that at the period of which he is speaking, the law of baptism was fully understood; and *on that account,* we say, such as refused to obey it, could not be received into the church. We also admit, that while there was this clear understanding, no such prohibition as we demand was requisite. But if it was rendered *unnecessary* because of this clear understanding, as this writer informs us, must it not by his own allowance become necessary, when that understanding ceases? If the presence of one thing *makes* another *unnecessary,* must not the absence of the same thing restore the necessity?

In the present instance, the *only* reason he assigns for an express prohibition *not* being then necessary, is, that the ordinance of baptism was *perfectly understood;* surely if this be the *only* reason, the necessity must return when that reason ceases; in other words, there will be a necessity for an express prohibition of the unbaptized, whenever the precept respecting baptism ceases to be

understood. Has it, or has it not, ceased (in our apprehension) to be understood by modern pædobaptists? If it be admitted that it has, then, on his own principle, an express prohibition of the unbaptized to receive the Lord's supper has become necessary. But he acknowledges that none exists; whence the only conclusion to be deduced is, either that the word of God has omitted what is necessary in itself, or (which is rather more probable) what is necessary to support *his hypothesis*. The word of God, it should be remembered, makes adequate provision for the direction of the faithful in every age, being written under the guidance of that Spirit to whom the remotest futurity was present; and though it was by no means requisite to specify the errors which were foreseen to arise, it is not a sufficient rule, unless it enables us to discover which of these are, and which are not, to be tolerated in the church. The doctrine which asserts that baptism is an indispensable requisite to communion, this writer expressly informs us, was not promulgated among the primitive christians, because they did not need it: their clear understanding of the nature of the ceremony was sufficient of itself to secure an attention to it, in the *absence* of that doctrine. This is equivalent to an acknowledgement, if there be any meaning in terms, that if they had not had the clear comprehension of the ordinance which he ascribes to them, they would have needed that

truth to be propounded, which in their situation was safely suppressed. But if the primitive christians would have found such information necessary, how is it that the modern pædobaptists, who are, according to our principles, precisely in the situation here supposed, can dispense with it? What should prevent them from turning upon Mr. Kinghorn, and saying—We judge ourselves baptized; but supposing we are not, you assert that there is no scriptural prohibition of the unbaptized approaching the Lord's table, which you yet acknowledge would have been necessary to justify the repelling of primitive christians from that privilege, had it not been for their perfect knowledge of the nature of baptism. But as you will not assert that *we* possess that knowledge, how will you defend yourself in treating us in a manner which, by your own concession, the apostles would not have been justified in adopting towards their immediate converts?

It was generally supposed, that the abettors of strict communion imagined some *peculiar* connexion betwixt baptism and the Lord's supper, beyond what subsists betwixt that ceremony and other parts of christianity. Our present opponent disclaims that notion. "If the above evidence," he says, "be justly stated, there is a real instituted connexion between baptism and the whole of the succeeding christian profession. So that there is no reason why the connexion between baptism

and the Lord's supper should be more distinctly marked, than between baptism and any other duty or privilege."* But if this be the case, why do they confine their restriction to the mere act of communion at the Lord's table? In every other respect they feel no scruple in acknowledging the members of other denominations as christians: they join with them in the most sacred duties; they interchange devotional services; they profess to value, and not unfrequently condescend to entreat, an interest in their prayers. In a word, no one who had not witnessed their commemoration of the Lord's supper, would suspect they made any distinction. There are a thousand acts which they perform towards such as practise infant sprinkling, which would be criminal and absurd on any other supposition than that of their being members of Christ, and co-heirs of eternal life. By the mouth of our author, whom they are proud of considering as their organ, they inform us that every other duty and privilege is as much dependent on baptism, as the celebration of the eucharist; yet it is *this* duty and *this* privilege alone, in which they refuse to participate with christians of other persuasions. How will they reconcile their practice and their theory: or rather, how escape the ridicule attached to such a glaring contradiction? The Sandemanian baptists have

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 30.

taken care to shelter themselves from such animadversions, by a stern and consistent process of intolerance; but the English baptists appear to resemble Ephraim, who mixed himself with the nations, and was a "cake half turned." Is there no duty, is there no privilege, characteristic of a christian, but what is included in receiving the sacrament? How is it that they have presumed to break down the sacred fence, to throw all open, and make all things common, with the exception of one narrow inclosure? What, in the mean time, becomes of apostolic practice, and ancient precedent? How admirably are these illustrated by their judicious selection of the Lord's table, as the spot over which to suspend the ensigns of party!

When we read of Priscilla and Aquila taking Apollos home, and instructing him in the way of the Lord more perfectly, we give full credit to the narrative; but had we been informed that these excellent persons, after hearing him with great delight, refused his admission to the supper of the Lord, on account of some diversity of opinion or of practice, the consent of all the manuscripts and versions in the world would have been insufficient to overcome the incredulity, arising from an instantaneous conviction of its total repugnance to the maxims and principles of primitive christianity. Yet this would have been nothing more than an anticipation of the practice of our opponents.

They attempt to justify themselves in this particular on two grounds; first, that they "do nothing more than their opponents;" and "where their conduct is deemed the most exceptionable, they only copy the example which the pædobaptists set before them, and support by preeminent talents."* *They do nothing more than their opponents.* What then? *we* hold no principle inconsistent with our practice; *we* have not confined the profession of christianity to ourselves; much less are we accustomed to make a practical distinction betwixt the participation of the eucharist, and other duties and privileges, after stating, in so many words, that the Scripture authorises no such distinction. The plea derived from the disposition of pædobaptists to cultivate a religious intercourse, we leave to be answered by himself, who has told us that "we meet on unequal terms." "The latter (pædobaptists) surrender no principle, they do not unite with those whom they deem unbaptized."†

Their other pretence is, that "prayer and praise are not *exclusive* ordinances of the church; that they were in being before it was formed, and have been parts of true religion under every dispensation."‡ But is it not the peculiar prerogative of the faithful to offer *acceptable* devotion? Is

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 173.

† P. 64. ‡ P. 175.

not *prayer in the name of Jesus* a peculiarity of the new dispensation, and is not the requesting a pædobaptist to present it on our behalf, as clear an acknowledgement of his christianity, as admitting him to communion, and, consequently, as incompatible with our author's own maxim, that the "church of Christ, acting upon the rule he has laid down, cannot recognise *any* person as his disciple, who is not baptized in his name?"

Mr. Kinghorn is bound by his own declaration, in his treatment of other denominations, to abstain from every action which will imply an explicit acknowledgement of their being christians; so that, as far as he is concerned, it is of no consequence whatever, whether prayer and praise belong to natural or revealed religion, or whether they are or are not exclusive ordinances of the church: the only question is, whether the reciprocation of such services, with other denominations, be not a recognition of their christianity. If it be, he is, by his acknowledgement, as much obliged to abandon it, as the practice of mixed communion, and exactly for the same reason; since he informs us that his objections to that practice are not founded on any *peculiar* connexion betwixt communion and baptism, but on the common relation which the latter bears to "all the duties of christianity."

The preceding remarks are more than sufficient to evince his inconsistency with himself; which, however glaring, is not more so than his deviation

from ancient precedent. That the first christians did not interchange religious services with those with whom they refused to *communicate;* that they did not countenance, in the exercise of their ministry, men whom they refused to acknowledge as members of the church,—it would be ridiculous to attempt to prove; the fact will be instantly admitted. Let it be also remembered, that this deviation is of far greater magnitude than that of which we are accused. Who, that remembers that the kingdom of God is not meats or drinks, that its nature is spiritual, not ritual, can doubt that the moral duties of religion, the love of the brethren, with its diversified fruits and effects, taken in their whole extent, form a more important object than the single observation of the eucharist?

Mr. Kinghorn himself deprecates the very suspicion of placing even baptism, in point of importance, on a level with the least of the moral precepts of Christ. But with respect to the whole of these, he and they allow themselves to depart as far from scriptural precedent, in its literal interpretation, as ourselves. In the affair of communion, they boast of adhering to "that plain rule of conduct, (to adopt my opponent's words,) *so did the apostles, and, therefore, so do we.*"* But here their conformity stops; in every other branch of social

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 98.

religion, in whatever respects the interior of the kingdom, they claim the liberty of treating the unbaptized in precisely the same manner with members of their own denomination; wherein they pronounce their own condemnation: for what should prevent us from retorting, *"so did not the apostles, but so do ye?"*

The distress and embarrassment which the consciousness of this glaring inconsistency occasioned the venerable Booth, are sufficiently depicted in his *Apology*. The sturdy saint perfectly reels and staggers under its insupportable weight; which, to use the language of Archbishop Tillotson, is a millstone round the neck of strict communion, which will inevitably sink it into perdition; an incongruity which the most obtuse understanding perceives, and no degree of acumen can defend; and which so totally annuls the plea of original precedent, which is their sheet-anchor, as to leave it doubtful whether its advocates are most at variance with the apostles or with themselves. The venerable apologist has recourse to the same distinctions with the present writer, but with so little success, and, apparently, with so little satisfaction to himself, that if the spirit of controversy did not blunt our sensibility, we should sincerely sympathise with his distress. It is humiliating to see his manly and majestic mind stooping to such miserable logomachies.

The advocates of the restrictive system must

change their ground; they *must* either go forwards or backwards. They have already conceded so much to the members of other denominations, that, if they would preserve the least shew of consistency, they must either concede more, or withdraw what they have granted. They have most unreasonably and capriciously stopped, and fixed their encampment where no mortal before ever thought of staying for a moment. They have already made such near approaches to the great body of those whom we deem unbaptized, as places them at an unmeasurable distance from the *letter* of the apostolic precedent, though in perfect harmony with its spirit; while they preposterously cling to that letter, as the reason for refusing to go an inch farther. They remain immovable, (to change the figure,) not because they rest on any solid basis, but because they are suspended betwixt the love of the brethren, and the remains of intolerance; just as Mahomet's tomb is said to hang betwixt two magnets of equal powers, placed in opposite directions.

The Scottish baptists (as I have been informed) act consistently. Conceiving, with Mr. Kinghorn, that immersion, on a profession of faith, is a necessary introduction to the christian profession, they uniformly abstain from a participation in sacred offices with the members of other societies, and, without pretending to judge of their final state, treat them on every occasion as men, whose

religious pretensions are doubtful. Whoever considers the import of the following passage, will be surprised Mr. Kinghorn should feel any hesitation in adopting the same system. "It is granted," says our author, "that baptism is not expressly inculcated as a preparative to the Lord's supper; neither is it inculcated as preparative to any thing else. But the *first* act of christian obedience is, of course, succeeded by the rest; and the required acknowledgement of our faith in Christ, in the nature of things, ought to *precede* the enjoyment of the privileges which arise from faith."*

By the *first* act of christian obedience, he unquestionably intends the reception of baptism; and the meaning of the sentence turns entirely on the word *first*. He designs to assert, that such is the prescribed order of religious actions—that unless that ordinance is *first* attended to, every other performance is invalid; that whatever it may be in itself, not occupying its proper place, it cannot lay claim to the character of a duty. We should be extremely concerned at imposing a false construction on his words; but if this is not his meaning, we despair of discovering it. But if our interpretation is just, unless we can conceive of a religion availing for eternal life, in the total absence of duties, it is equivalent to asserting,

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 30.

that none besides our denomination possess true religion. He expressly tells us every other duty must *succeed,* that is, must come *after,* baptism, which, with respect to pædobaptists, is impossible on our principles; whence it necessarily follows, that while they retain their sentiments, they are disqualified for the performance of duty. The only conceivable method of evading this conclusion, is to make a distinction, and to affirm, that though baptism ought, agreeably to the institution of Christ, to *precede* the other branches of religion, yet that when it is omitted from a misconception or mistake, the omission is not of such magnitude as to prevent their being accepted. But should our author explain himself in this manner, he will not only coincide with us, but his argument for strict communion will be relinquished. Having acknowledged that "the connexion between baptism and the Lord's supper is *not more directly* marked in scripture, than between that ordinance and any other duty,"* were he now to make a distinction in favour of the sacrament, and confine the disqualification to that particular, he would be guilty of an express contradiction. Nor are his words susceptible of such an interpretation. The assertion he makes is in the form of a general proposition; which is, that *all* the duties of christianity must succeed baptism, in

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 30.

contradiction to going before it; and the disqualification for the Lord's supper, which he represents the pædobaptists as lying under, is inferred solely from the consideration of its constituting a part of those duties.

Thus much for the *duties;* let us next hear what he says of the *privileges* of christianity. Baptism, which he styles "the required acknowledgement of our faith in Christ," he tells us, "ought to *precede* the enjoyment of the privileges which arise from faith." They *ought* to precede, but *do* they in fact? Is it *his* opinion that all other sects, as a punishment for their disobedience in one particular, are left destitute of the spiritual immunities which flow from faith? If it is not, it behoves him to reflect on the presumption of such a mode of speaking, which is little less than arraigning the wisdom of the great Head of the church, who dispenses his favours in a manner so different from that which he ventures to prescribe. Should he reply, that Jesus Christ, as a Sovereign, is at liberty to act as he pleases, but that we are under an obligation of adhering to the settled order of his house, it is easy to perceive that this evasion is neither consistent with truth, nor sufficient to establish his consistency with himself. Are not his partizans in the daily habit of exhibiting towards the members of other societies, tokens of their fraternal regard, of inviting them to every branch of christian fellowship,

short of admission to the sacrament? Will they deny that the communion of saints, even in the absence of that institution, is an important privilege?

In the next place, to represent the bestowment of spiritual blessings on the great body of the faithful, through the lapse of fifteen centuries, whose salvability, it is confessed, is capable of demonstration from scripture; to speak of this, as an extraordinary and extrajudicial procedure, is to confound the most obvious distinctions.

The terms of salvation, which are, radically, faith and repentance, are clearly propounded in the word of God; and surely it will not be doubted that multitudes out of the pale of our sect, have exhibited such proofs of their possessing these qualifications, that their enjoyment of the divine favour is not to be ascribed to a secret economy, similar to what has been conjectured by some to extend to virtuous pagans. Where revelation is silent, it becomes us to copy its reserve; but in the present instance, so far is this from being the case, that few propositions are more susceptible of proof from that quarter, than that an error, with respect to a positive rite, is not fatal; whence the necessary inference is, that the bestowment of God's favours on such as labour under that imperfection, is a known part of his conduct: that it is not only his intention so to act, but that he has taken effectual care to inform us of it; not,

we presume, for the purpose of enabling us to contradict it, but as a pattern for our humble imitation.

When the Holy Ghost fell upon the Gentiles, assembled in the house of Cornelius, though Peter had, a short time before, doubted the lawfulness even of eating with them, he considered it as such a seal of the divine approbation, that he felt no hesitation in immediately admitting them to all the privileges of the church. He did not presume (with reverence be it spoken) to be stricter or more orderly than God. "Forasmuch," said he, "as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us who believed, who was I that I should withstand God?" a question which we presume to recommend to the serious consideration of Mr. Kinghorn and his associates. The principle on which he justified his conduct is plainly this, that when it is once ascertained that an individual is the object of divine acceptance, it would be impious to withhold from him any religious privilege. Until it be shewn that this was not the principle on which he rested his defence, or that the practice of strict communion is consistent with it, we shall feel ourselves compelled to discard, with just detestation, a system of action which St. Peter contemplated with horror, as *withstanding God:* and, when I consider it in this just and awful light, I feel no hesitation in avowing my conviction that it is replete with worse consequences, and is far

more offensive to God, than that corruption of a christian ordinance to which it is opposed. The latter affects the exterior only of our holy religion, the former its vitals; where it inflicts a wound on the very heart of charity, and puts the prospect of union among christians to an interminable distance.

This new doctrine, that the tenure by which religious privileges are held, is appropriated to the members of one inconsiderable sect, must strike the serious reader with astonishment. Are we in reality the only persons who possess an interest in the common salvation? If we are not, by what title do others possess it? Certainly not in consequence of their faith, for we are expressly taught by this writer, that baptism must *precede* the enjoyment of the privileges which arise from faith;* in which, however, he expressly contradicts himself, for he assures us that none are fit subjects of baptism who are not previously believers in Christ, and *justified in the sight of God by their faith.* He must either say, then, that they lose their justification unless they comply with that ordinance, or present us with the portentous doctrine of a justification which stands alone, a widowed and barren justification, productive of no advantage to its possessor.

Let it also be seriously considered, whether the positions we have been examining, do not coincide

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 30.

with the doctrine of the *opus operatum*, the opprobrium of the Romish church. But as some of my readers may not be acquainted with the meaning of these terms, it is proper to remark, that the church of Rome attributes the highest spiritual benefits to certain corporeal actions, or ceremonies, independent of the character and disposition of the performer. For example, she believes that the ceremony of baptism secures to the unconscious infant, by its intrinsic efficacy, the infusion of regenerating grace, without regard to the intention or disposition of the parties concerned; and that the element of bread in the sacrament, operates in the same manner in procuring the pardon, and augmenting the grace, of the communicant. Hence the members of that church lay little stress on the exercise of faith, and the cultivation of holy dispositions, compared to the dependence they place on "bodily exercise," on masses, penances, auricular confessions, and a multitude of external observances, which form the substance of their religion. Consistent protestants, on the contrary, while they conscientiously attend to every positive institute, according to the measure of their light, look upon the few and simple ceremonies of the gospel, as incapable of affording the smallest benefit apart from the dispositions and intentions with which they are performed; agreeably to the doctrine of our Saviour, who tells us, that "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must

worship him in spirit and in truth." To expatiate on the incalculable mischiefs which have arisen from the Romish doctrine, is foreign to our purpose; suffice it to remark that it is held in just detestation by all enlightened christians.

Our business is to shew the coincidence of Mr. Kinghorn's principles with that most dangerous and exploded tenet. He contends that the mere absence of a ceremony, or if you please, an incorrect manner of performing it, is, of *itself*, sufficient, exclusive of every other consideration, to incur the forfeiture of christian privileges; of the *privileges in general* which arise from faith.* It is not, according to him, merely the forfeiture of a title to the eucharist which it involves; *that*, he informs us, is not more affected by it than *any other privilege:* it is the universal privation of christian immunities which is the immediate consequence of that omission; and, as he acknowledges that many to whom it attaches are regenerated, they must consequently be endowed with right dispositions. For what is that renovation of mind which can exist without them? But if such as are possessed of these in the most eminent degree, which he acknowledges is the case with some pædobaptists, are yet debarred from spiritual privileges, wherein does this differ from ascribing that efficacy to an external rite, which is supposed in the doctrine of the *opus operatum:* and if those who have faith

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 30.

are not entitled to the benefits which result from it, because a certain ceremony is wanting, how is it possible to ascribe more to that ceremony?

Whatever degree of prejudice or inattention we may be disposed to impute to some of the advocates of infant baptism, it would be the highest injustice to comprehend them all under the same censure. There are those, no doubt, who, without adopting our views, have exercised as much thought, and exerted as much impartiality, on the subject, as our observation authorises us to expect from the brightest specimens of human nature: nay, this author admits that "it is possible they may be some of the most exalted characters in point of piety."* But it surely cannot be doubted that they who merit this encomium, are as *conscientious* in their performance of infant, as we in the administration of adult, baptism; and as they are, by the very supposition, actuated by dispositions exactly the same, the pure intention of pleasing and glorifying God, if we still conceive them deprived of the privileges which we possess, the difference must be ascribed merely to a ceremony, and the *opus operatum* returns in its full force. This however is too faint a statement. It returns in a form more aggravated; for the papist only contends for a mysterious union betwixt the outward rite and the inward grace, to which the regenerating influence is immediately ascribed, and

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 30.

from which it is considered as inseparable; whereas, on the present hypothesis, regeneration and faith are supposed to exist in the absence of the ceremony, but to be deprived of their prerogatives. The system of the papist exalts the ritual part of religion to an unwarrantable height, without depreciating the spiritual and internal; the system of my opponent does both.

Thus I have endeavoured to examine, with the utmost care and impartiality, whatever our author has advanced, in order to prove the *necessary connexion* betwixt the two positive ordinances under consideration. My apology for extending the discussion to a length, tedious, it is feared, to the reader, is, that this is the point on which the whole controversy hinges. As far as its real merits are concerned, I might therefore be excused from pursuing the subject farther. If the arguments of Mr. Kinghorn, on this head, are satisfactorily refuted, and the contradictions and absurdities into which he has fallen, laid open to the reader, he is already sufficiently answered. That he has taken different ground from his venerable predecessor, will not be disputed. He has argued from premises, and adopted principles, to which that excellent person made no approach. Mr. Booth, whatever was his success, remained on *terra firma*: our author has attempted a flight beyond "the diurnal orb," but approaching too near the sun, his pinions are melted, and his fall will be con-

spicuous, in exact proportion to the elevation to which he has aspired. He was determined to give the controversy a new and imposing aspect; and, conscious that the practice which he undertook to defend had been hitherto rested on no very distinct basis, he determined to dig deep for a foundation, and in so doing, has disturbed the most received opinions, and endangered the most momentous truths. Were I permitted to prognosticate his fate, I should say that his paradoxical mode of defence, whatever applause it may meet with at present, will, in the end, be of infinite injury to the cause; and his treatise, like the little book in the Apocalypse, be "sweet in the mouth, and bitter in the belly."

But though what has already been advanced, may be considered as comprehending all that is essential in the controversy; as he has thought fit to introduce other topics, the reader is requested to exercise his patience, while we reply to his most important observations on each of these; after which we shall endeavour to shew the futility of the answer he has attempted to the principal arguments adduced in favour of our practice.

# PART II.

## THE COLLATERAL TOPICS INTRODUCED BY MR. KINGHORN CONSIDERED.

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## CHAP. IV.

### *The Charge of dispensing with a Christian Ordinance, considered.*

AMONG the various objections to the system we wish to see universally adopted in our churches, there is none more frequently insisted upon than that of its implying a right to *dispense* with a command of Christ.* Though the treatise on the Terms of Communion contains a clear answer to this accusation, yet, as it is again brought forward by our author, with unabated confidence, a fuller reply may be deemed requisite.

This writer supposes that the expression "dispensing power," so often used in this controversy,

* Here the following question deserves our serious regard, first, "Have we any right to dispense with a clear command of Christ?" —*Baptism a Term of Communion*, p. 90.

was first suggested by the conduct of Charles the Second, in granting indulgence to the dissenters beyond the allowance of law, a measure which was afterwards adopted, for similar purposes, by James, his successor. It is surprising a person of Mr. Kinghorn's acknowledged learning should fall into such an error; that he should not know that the doctrine of dispensation was familiar to preceding ages, and was the subject of much subtle disquisition, and of many refined distinctions among legal writers. It is impossible but that he must have read, in ecclesiastical history, of the power of dispensation assumed by the pope, which formed a principal branch of the papal revenue, and the exertion of which was regulated by the dictates of the most artful policy. He cannot, surely, have forgotten that the refusal to exercise this prerogative, when it was demanded in order to gratify the capricious passions of Henry the Eighth, was the immediate occasion of the reformation in England.

The power of dispensation is the power of setting aside the law in a particular instance. It may be exerted by the legislature, or by the executive branch of government, under certain regulations, and to a certain extent, previously settled and provided for by the original constitution of the state. As the operation of law is general, and the actions to which it applies are susceptible of endless modifications and varieties, some such

power may be occasionally requisite to adapt it more perfectly to unexpected emergencies, and, by a deviation from the letter, to secure its spirit and design. There is one circumstance, however, which is invariably attached to the exercise of this prerogative, which shews the impropriety of making it the ground of accusation in the present controversy. It always implies a *known* and *conscious* departure from the law. He who claims a dispensing power, asserts his right to deviate from the letter of legal enactments; but whoever merely misinterprets their meaning, and, on that account, applies them to a case which they were not designed to comprehend, or neglects to carry them into execution within their proper sphere, (as his conduct is consistent with the utmost reverence for the law,) is at a great remove from exerting a dispensing power. He betrays his ignorance, but usurps nothing.

When the pope granted a dispensation, enabling certain persons to marry within the prohibited degrees, he sanctioned an acknowledged violation of the ecclesiastical canons; just as Charles the First and James the Second, in their respective proclamations of indulgence to tender consciences, proceeded in direct opposition to existing statutes. But we are conscious of no such procedure; if we err, we err from ignorance. We contend that the law is in our favour, and challenge our opponents to prove the contrary; we ask what prohibition

we violate by the practice of admitting good men to communion, though they are not supposed to be baptized? This writer acknowledges there is none, but attempts to supply the defect by general reasoning, which appears to us inconclusive. Such is precisely the state of the dispute; not whether we have a right to depart from the law, but whether there be any law to which our practice is opposed. We acknowledge the immersion of believers in the name of Christ is a duty of perpetual obligation; we are convinced of the same respecting the commemoration of our Saviour's passion. Both these duties we accordingly urge on the followers of Christ, by such arguments as the Scriptures supply; but, when we are not so happy as to produce conviction, we admit them, without scruple, to the fellowship of the church; not because we conceive ourselves to possess a dispensing power, a pretension most foreign from our thoughts, but because we sincerely believe them entitled to it, by the tenour of the christian covenant, and that we should be guilty of highly offending Christ by their refusal. The law which we are supposed to violate in this instance, we affirm is a mere human invention, a mere fiction of the brain, entirely unsupported by the word of God, which distinctly lays down two positive institutes, baptism and the Lord's supper, but suggests nothing from which we can conclude that they rest upon each other, rather than that the obligation of both is founded

on the express injunction of the legislator. It is our opponents, we assert, who, in the total silence of scripture, have presumed to promulgate a law, to which they claim the submission due only to the voice of God. Hence the charge of usurping a dispensing power is most preposterous, since it is incapable of being sustained for a moment, until it is demonstrated that the law is in their favour; and when this is accomplished, we pledge ourselves to relinquish our practice immediately; but, till it is, to assume it as a medium of proof, is a palpable *petitio principii*, it is begging the question in debate.

We repeat again, what was observed in the former treatise, that this charge owes its plausibility entirely to the equivocal use of terms. As we do not insist upon baptism as a term of communion, we may be said, *quoad hoc*, or so far, to dispense with it; just as our opponents may be said to dispense with that particular opinion, the doctrine of election, for example, which, while they firmly adhere to it themselves, they refrain from attempting to force on the consciences of others; on which occasion, a rigid calvinist might, with the same propriety, exclaim that they are guilty of dispensing with the truth of God.

So remote is our practice from implying the claim of superiority to law, that it is, in our view, the necessary result of obedience to that comprehensive precept—"Receive ye one another, even

as Christ has received you to the glory of the Father." If the practice of toleration is admitted at all, it must have for its object some supposed deviation from truth, or failure of duty; and, as there is no transgression where there is no law, and every such deviation must be opposed to a rule of action, if the forbearance exercised towards it is assuming a dispensing power, the accusation equally lies against all parties, except such as insist upon an absolute uniformity. In every instance, he who declines insisting on an absolute rectitude of opinion or practice, as the term of union, is liable to the same charge as is adduced against the indulgence for which we are pleading. If the precise view which each individual entertains of the rule of faith and practice, is to be enforced on every member as the condition of fellowship, the duty of "forbearing with each other" is annihilated: but, if something short of this is insisted on, what is wanting to come up to the perfection of the rule, is, in the sense of our opponents, dispensed with. Behold, then, the *dispensing power* rises in all its terrors; nor will it be possible to form a conception of an act of toleration where it is not included. Such is the inevitable consequence, if the charge is attached simply to our not insisting upon what we esteem a revealed duty; but, if it is sustained on the ground of the necessary dependence of one christian rite upon another, it is plainly preposterous,

since this is the very position we deny; it forms the very gist of the dispute, the proof which will at once consign it to oblivion. The objection, in this form, is nothing more than an enunciation, in other terms, of our actual practice.

In every controversy, the medium by which a disputed point is attempted to be disproved, should contain something distinct from the position itself, or no progress is made. There may be a shew of reasoning, but nothing more. It is also necessary, that the medium of proof, or confutation, should contain some proposition, about which both parties are agreed. But what is the case here? Our opponents object that we exercise a dispensing power. How does this appear? Because, while we acknowledge baptism to be a duty, we do not invariably demand it as a preliminary to church fellowship. Now let me ask, is this statement any thing more than a mere definition, or description, of the practice which is the subject of debate; so that if an inquiry were made, what we mean by open communion, in what other terms could the answer be couched? The intelligent reader will instantly perceive, that the medium of confutation involves neither more nor less than the proposition to be refuted. Perhaps they will reply, No; you are guilty of dispensing with the law, not merely because baptism is a duty, but because the Head of the church has made it an indispensable prerequisite to christian fellowship. Here the medium

is indeed sufficiently distinct from the proposition which it is intended to confute, but it is so far from being agreed upon between the parties, that it forms the very subject of debate. In other words, they take for granted the very position on which the controversy turns, and then convert their arbitrary assumption into an argument. Thus, in whatever light it is viewed, the odious imputation with which they attempt to load us, falls to the ground; and merely shews with what facility they can *dispense* with the rules of logic.

Near akin to this, is the charge of "sanctioning" a corruption of a christian ordinance. But how the mere act of communion with a christian brother, whose practice we judge to be erroneous in a certain particular, can be justly considered as conferring a sanction on his error, is not a little mysterious. If this is a fair construction, it must proceed upon the general principle, that communion sanctions all the imperfections, speculative and practical, of the members whom it includes; and thus our opponents must be understood to approve all the perverse tempers, and erroneous views, of the individuals whom they receive into fellowship. Will they abide by this consequence? But how is it possible to escape it, if to tolerate and to sanction, to forbear and to approve, are the same thing? Will they assert that St. Paul was prepared to exclude the members of the church at Corinth, against whose irregularities he

so warmly protested; or affirm that, by declining such a step, he sanctioned the schisms and tumults, the backbitings, whisperings, and swellings, which he reproved with so much severity. The idea is too ridiculous to be entertained for a moment; but not more so than the present allegation.

Were an impartial spectator to witness the celebration of the sacrament, by persons of different denominations, what would he infer? That they considered each other as beings "without fault before God," with nothing in their sentiments liable to correction, or in their characters susceptible of improvement? No: the only conclusion which he could consistently draw would be, that they looked upon each other as pardoned sinners, washed in the same fountain, sanctified, though imperfectly, by the same Spirit, and fellow-travellers to the same celestial city.

We must either seek a church such as is not to be found upon earth, or be content to associate with men compassed with infirmities; prepared to exercise towards others the forbearance and indulgence which we need, and to exhibit on every occasion the humility becoming those who are conscious that in "many things we all offend."

Besides, as our author acknowledges that baptism is not to be "compared in importance with the least of Christ's moral precepts," against which men of unquestionable piety are perpetually

offending, to a greater or less extent; where is the consistency of being more solicitous to avoid the appearance of sanctioning ceremonial, than moral disobedience?

The following sentiment, marked in italics, and delivered with the solemnity of an oracle, is characterized by the same spirit of extravagance. "The supposition itself," our author says, "that toleration and forbearance will justify us in allowing an omission of any law of Christ in his church, operates as a repeal of that law, and would generally be deemed unreasonable."* As all duty bears respect to a law, it is impossible to conceive of its omission, without supposing an equal omission of the law.

He illustrates his assertion by referring to the legal qualification, in landed property, required in a candidate for a seat in parliament; where it is evident that, to render the cases parallel, it must be assumed, that baptism is, by the appointment of the Head of the Church, the necessary qualification for the rights of fellowship, which is the very point in debate; so that we have here another instance of that habit of begging the question, with which he is so familiar. On what occasion has he found us concede what is taken for granted in this illustration; or who would be so absurd, after such a concession, as to pursue the argument any further?

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 53.

The proposition itself is as untenable, as its illustration is irrelevant. If every rule of action is repealed, the moment its omission, whether partial or total, whether occasional or habitual, whether intentional or unintentional, is the object of forbearance, a repeal is the necessary concomitant of every conceivable instance of toleration. For say, on supposition the will of Christ were perfectly complied with, in doctrine and in practice, what possible room would there be for mutual forbearance? What, to speak of forbearance, when all is right! Is perfection then the object of toleration? But just in proportion as imperfection exists, some law, some rule of conduct, must be neglected; "for where there is no law, there is no transgression." Will it be affirmed, that when St. Paul censured, with so much severity, the swellings, the tumults, the whisperings, and the backbitings, which prevailed in the church of Corinth, whose members were ready to devour each other; when he found it necessary to remind them, that the unjust should not inherit the kingdom of God, did he after all perceive in them no omission of a law of Christ? This surely none will affirm: and, as he still continued to exercise forbearance, without the slightest intimation of an intention to exclude them, he was guilty, on Mr. Kinghorn's principles, of repealing the commands of God. As the evils tolerated were of a moral nature, and he tells us, that he is far from "equalizing

baptism with the least of Christ's moral precepts;" if, in spite of his own concession, he now assigns it a superiority, what is this but a palpable contradiction? But to say that a mistake respecting the nature of a christian ordinance, is not to be borne with in religious society, while evils of a moral kind are, and must be tolerated, is to mark its preeminence, in a manner the most unequivocal.

The mistakes into which he has fallen in this short passage, are so gross and so many, that they deserve a distinct enumeration. First, By affirming that to endure, under any circumstances, the omission of a rule of action, is to repeal it, he has reduced the very conception of toleration to an impossibility. Secondly, As there can be no moral imperfection, but what involves, at least, an occasional omission of a moral precept, the least of which, he affirms, is of greater moment than baptism; he must either contend for the propriety of setting aside forbearance altogether, or must be understood to select for its object the greater, in preference to the least, of two evils. Thirdly, In assuming it for granted, that there is a law in existence, which universally prohibits the unbaptized from communion, he assumes the whole question in debate; and if no such rule is admitted, how is it possible we should be guilty of repealing it. Fourthly, In stigmatizing the practice of not invariably insisting on a compliance

with primitive baptism, in order to fellowship, as a virtual repeal of the precept which enjoins it, while we inculcate it as a divine command, and testify our disapprobation of its neglect, is a strange abuse of terms, founded on the following principle; that whatever is not absolutely and invariably required as a term of communion, is virtually repealed; whence it necessarily follows, that the whole of that duty in which the church of Corinth was defective, that whole portion of the mind of Christ which they failed to exemplify, was considered, by St. Paul, as no longer binding; since, however it might excite his concern, and draw forth his rebuke, the *want* of it, it is evident, did not prevent his forbearance. Will he abide by this inference? If he declines it, let him shew, if he is able, why it is less applicable to the conduct of St. Paul, than to ours?

That we do not repeal the ordinance, by which our denomination is distinguished, considered as a *duty*, is a fact, of which we give ocular demonstration as often as it is celebrated. True, say our opponents, but you repeal it, as a necessary preliminary to the Lord's supper. To which the answer is obvious: first prove that it is so, and then, should we continue obstinate, load us as much as you please with the opprobrium of abrogating a divine command. But cease to run round this miserable circle, of first assuming the existence of a law, confining communion within

certain limits, then accusing us of repealing it, and lastly, of finding us guilty of transgressing the prescribed bounds, on the ground of that repeal. He who repeals a rule of action, reduces the system of duty to exactly the same state as though it had never existed. Whenever we are convicted of doing this, whenever we teach the nullity of baptism, or inculcate a habit of indifference, respecting either the mode or the subject of that ordinance, we will bow to the justice of the charge; but till then, we feel justified in treating it with the neglect due to an attempt to convince without logic, and to criminate without guilt.

The πρωτον ψευδος, the radical fallacy, of the whole proceeding, consists in confounding an interpretation of the law, however just, with the law itself; in affirming of the first, whatever is true of the last; and of subverting, under that pretext, the right of private judgement. The interpretation of a rule is, to him who adopts it, equally binding with the rule itself, because every one must act on his own responsibility; but he has no authority whatever to bind it on the conscience of his brother, and to treat him who receives it not, as though he were at direct issue with the legislator. It is this presumptuous claim of infallibility, this assumption of the prerogative of Christ, this disposition to identify ourselves with him, and to place our conclusions on a footing with his

mandates, that is the secret spring of all that intolerance which has so long bewitched the world with her sorceries, from the elevation of papal Rome, where she thunders and lightens from the Vatican, down to baptist societies, where "she whispers feebly from the dust."

This writer has, with the best intentions, I doubt not, dragged from its obscurity a principle whose thorough application and developement would doom, not our societies alone, but every church in the universe, to a confusion of minds and of tongues, a state of discord and anarchy, the healing of which, would soon find him other employ than that of attempting to defend the petty and repulsive peculiarity to which he has devoted his labours.

Before I close this chapter, it is proper to observe, in order to obviate misconception, that nothing is more remote from my intention than to plead for a *wilful* omission of any part of the will of Christ. His honour, I trust, is as dear, His prerogative as sacred, in the eyes of the advocates of *christian*, as it is in those of *sectarian*, communion. Let each, in the regulation of his own conduct, pay the most scrupulous attention to His orders; and wherever he distinctly perceives that a professor of religion indulges himself in a known and habitual violation of them, let him, after seasonable and repeated admonition, "withdraw from the brother that walketh disorderly."

But let him not presume to control the sentiments and conduct of others by his standard, and treat as an enemy or an alien, that humble follower of Christ, who is as sincerely devoted to his will as himself; and who, however he may mistake it in some particulars, would shudder at the thought of setting voluntary bounds to obedience. If, to tolerate such, must subject us to the reproach of repealing the law of Christ, let us remember that we are not the first who have been condemned for undervaluing the ritual part of religion, and for preferring mercy to sacrifice. As "we must all appear before the judgement-seat of Christ," we await, with much composure and confidence, his decision; without indulging the smallest apprehension that we shall meet with less compassion for having shewn it, or that we shall incur his displeasure for refusing to "beat our fellow servants."

## CHAP. V.

*An Inquiry how far the Practice of mixed Communion affects the Grounds of Dissent from the Church of England, and from the Church of Rome.*

Mr. Kinghorn expresses his surprise that the champions of the hierarchy have neglected in their controversy with dissenters, to *avail themselves of the practice of mixed communion.* For my part, I am only surprised at his surprise. For, supposing (what is most contrary to fact) that it had furnished them with some advantage against a part of the baptists, what mighty triumph would it be to have proved, that a branch only of a denomination, by no means considerable in their eyes, had been betrayed into an inconsistency? The abettors of a splendid hierarchy were little likely to descend to a petty altercation with the members of one division of dissent, respecting a point which could merely supply an *argumentum ad hominem,* and about which their opponents are far from being agreed.

To us, however, it is of importance to consider whether the doctrine we have attempted to

establish, is justly chargeable with infringing on the legitimate principles of dissent. With this view, we shall briefly examine the substance of our author's arguments on this subject.

We are accused of inconsistency in arraigning the church of England "for introducing rites and ceremonies which have indeed no scriptural authority, but which are pleaded for, merely as decent and venerable customs; while we ourselves tolerate in the church, the neglect of an institution which we are convinced was universally obeyed in the apostolic times, and which was appointed by the highest authority."* To this we reply, that the cases are not parallel; they differ in the most essential particulars.

It is one thing to tolerate, and another to practise. The law of God invariably and absolutely forbids the latter; that is, it uniformly prohibits the performance of a single action which we esteem contrary to his will, but to say it in all cases forbids the former, is to insist on an absolute agreement respecting every branch of practice. The objection is brought against *us* who neither practise nor sanction infant baptism, that we are chargeable with the same criminality which is supposed to attach to the introducers of human rites and ceremonies in religion, ceremonies which they unquestionably both practise and approve.

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 123.

The argument of the writer reduced to the form of a syllogism is as follows:—

To practise human rites and ceremonies in the worship of God is sinful;

But the advocates of mixed communion suffer to remain in the church, persons who practise a certain ceremony of human invention;

Therefore *their* conduct is sinful.

Who does not perceive that the second proposition has no necessary connexion with the first, and that the argument is consequently invalid? In order to establish his conclusion, it behoved the author to prove that we practise and approve infant baptism, which he knows to be impossible. If pædobaptists required our concurrence in what we esteem an erroneous practice, nay, if they refused us the liberty of protesting against it, there would be an analogy betwixt the two cases; as it is, there is none.

We are bound by an express law to tolerate in the church those whom Christ has received; and he has, by the acknowledgement even of our opponents, received the pædobaptists. The first of these positions we feel ourselves justified in affirming till it be disproved; which this writer is so far from having done, that no attempt, we shall plainly make appear, was ever more unsuccessful. But whether it be true, or not, that we

are commanded to act thus, such is our opinion; and with this persuasion, we are not at liberty to act in a different manner. But will such as prescribe human rites and ceremonies, pretend to act under a similar conviction, a conviction that they are bound by the law of Christ, to use the cross in baptism, to bow to the east, to kneel at the sacrament, and to exact as a term of communion, a compliance with these and other ceremonies, judged by themselves indifferent, and by us sinful? The most zealous champions of the hierarchy make no such pretension, and we may therefore very consistently censure them for enforcing, under such a penalty, the observation of rites for which no divine precept is urged, while we tolerate pædobaptists in obedience to a divine injunction; unless it be the same thing to practise in the worship of God, what it is allowed he has not commanded, and to comply with an express prescription. If the members of the establishment inquire, On what ground do you receive a pædobaptist? we reply, Because we are expressly commanded to receive him. But if we inquire in our turn, Why do you kneel at the sacrament, and exact that posture of all your communicants, is it affirmed that they will reply in the same manner? It is not true, then, that mixed communion stands upon the same ground with the rites and ceremonies of the church of England; consequently, whatever be its merits or demerits in other

respects, it may be maintained, in perfect consistence with the principle of dissent.

To the objection that it was as much unknown in the apostolic age as the ceremonies in question, we have already replied, that at that period it was impossible there should be any controversy on the subject of baptism, which was so recently instituted and so fully exemplified in the conduct of the apostles; but that now, when a question has arisen, what is baptism, a new case occurs, in the determination of which we must be guided by the precepts respecting mutual forbearance. To this the author replies in behalf of the churchman, "Very well; and when the emperors and kings of former days were converted to the christian faith, and were desirous of sanctioning the gospel by their character, their property, and their influence, another *new case* occurred, of which apostolic times knew nothing. When nations became generally christian, other *new cases* arose out of the new events of the time."* To this I answer, It is very possible, undoubtedly, for a churchman to utter the same words, and say a *new case* has arisen; but unless he can say it with the same truth, it will be nothing to the purpose. There is no reason why we should not assert what is true, merely because a false assertion respecting another subject may be couched in the same words. Is it true, or is it not, that a refusal to comply with

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 124.

a precept; knowing it to be a command of Christ, is a very different thing from a mere misconception of the nature and import of that command: if it be, will it be asserted that such as had refused to make a profession of his religion, in the way which they were conscious he had appointed, would have been just as excusable as the most candid and impartial of modern pædobaptists? Unless he will assert this, the author must acknowledge that here is a new case, and that the question how we should treat the wilful contemner of legitimate authority, and the erroneous interpreter of scripture, involves separate inquiries. From a multitude of passages it is manifest, that he himself forms a very different opinion of the present pædobaptists, from what he would entertain of such as knowingly and deliberately resisted a positive command. He professes to give them entire credit for their sincerity, and to entertain a firm persuasion of their ready admission into the kingdom of heaven; which would be absurd on the latter supposition. In maintaining a different conduct towards two descriptions of persons, between which there is acknowledged to be a total diversity of character, we are perfectly consistent; unless it be asserted that judgement ought to have no influence on conduct, nor action be controlled by principle.

Let the impartial reader judge for himself whether it is possible, by any fair mode of argument,

to infer from these premises the lawfulness of making the conversion of kings to christianity a pretext for placing them at the head of the church, or of acknowledging their right to model the worship of God at their pleasure. Yet this is asserted, and these portentous consequences are said necessarily to flow from our principles. It is a matter of some curiosity, what kind of syllogism will fairly connect the two following propositions. It is lawful to admit a pious pædobaptist to communion, because we are commanded to receive such as Christ has received. Therefore it is lawful to acknowledge a pious prince as head of the church, and to allow him to model its worship as he pleases. We quoted a scriptural precept for the former; will Mr. Kinghorn favour us with something equivalent for the latter; or will he remind us of the passages which assert Christ to be the "Head over all things to the church," or those which command us to "call no man master upon earth?" His reasoning in this, as in the former instance, is clogged with a twofold absurdity: first, he confounds toleration with concurrence; for they who contend for the right of a king to be head, I presume *acknowledge* him as such: secondly, because we may innocently do what is commanded, or rather are not permitted to do the contrary, he, with great simplicity, infers, we may lawfully venture on what is *forbidden.*

The same reasoning applies to the introduction of ceremonies, and completely invalidates his conclusion, that because we tolerate infant baptism, which we consider as a human invention, we cannot consistently depart from the established church on account of the introduction of rites which we deem superstitious. He represents a churchman as addressing us in the following manner. "Is not forbearance to be granted to *us* also in what we deem right and expedient? Suppose that we are weak brethren, as weak as you choose to represent us; why should you not, even in pity to our weakness, tolerate us in adding a few things to the original institutions of the Lord, rather than leave us, and, by schism, rend the seamless garment of Christ?"* In reply to this, let me ask, Is the toleration of objectionable ceremonies sufficient to constitute a churchman? or are we invited to be mere spectators of these observances, without *joining* in them? But do the pædobaptists, when *they* propose to commune with us, expect us to join with them in their practice of infant baptism? How futile then is it, to conclude, that because we are not to do evil that good may come, we must, on no occasion, bear with the imperfections we cannot remedy.

Mr. Kinghorn largely insists on the superiority of his system to ours, on account of its being at a

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 125.

greater remove from the principles of the established church. "The strict baptist," he observes, "can set the churchman at defiance, while he tells him respectfully, but plainly, that his church is wrong in its very constitution, that it is formed of materials different from those used by the Saviour, and that these materials are united together in a way totally diverse from that of his institution."*

Had he succeeded in shewing that his practice is alone consistent with the principles of dissent, his argument would have been to the purpose. But to found a claim to preference, merely on a wider deviation from the established church, is to take for granted, what is palpably false, that the established church, like the kingdom of darkness, is a mere mass of corruption and error, from which the farther we recede, we necessarily approach nearer to rectitude. That it comprehends many abuses, we sufficiently attest our conviction by our dissent; but as it contains a mixture of good and evil, if we suffer ourselves to look with a more favourable eye upon a doctrine, merely because its admission will remove us farther from the establishment, we may fall, ere we are aware, into the gulf of perdition. Upon this principle, we may embrace socinianism; for socinians are, unquestionably, farther removed from the church than orthodox

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 127.

dissenters. We may embrace popery, since all sound catholics consider the church of England as being in a damnable state. We always supposed it was the agreement of a doctrine with the Scriptures, not its disagreement with any human system, which formed its true recommendation; and that to consult our antipathies in the choice of a religion, was equally unchristian and unsafe.

Besides, the objection which he makes to the constitution of the established church, is as consistent with our principles, as with his. Where a society embraces a whole nation, and recognises as her members, all who are born within certain geographical limits, many who are openly wicked must necessarily be included; and the materials of which it is composed, essentially different from those which formed the primitive church, which consisted of such as were "called, and chosen, and faithful." Of such an assemblage, it is not too much to say, in the words of this writer, "that the whole body, taken in the aggregate, are of a *different character* from that which is in the New Testament called a church of Christ:"* and as this reason for dissent, deduced from the indiscriminate mixture of good and bad, is not weakened or impaired by the practice of open communion, we are as much entitled as he is, to all the advantage it affords.

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 127.

But when we are accused of using different materials in the erection, from those which were originally admitted into the fabric, because we admit some, who, in our judgement, are not baptized, we deny the charge, and acknowledge ourselves at a loss to conceive how "living stones, built on the only true foundation," can essentially differ from each other, on account of a transient ceremony; unless it is affirmed, that sanctifying grace is a less powerful principle of attraction and assimilation than an external circumstance, and that Simon Magus bore more resemblance to the primitive christians than Richard Baxter. We are at an equal loss to discover how a ceremony can impress a character. That immersion leaves no permanent corporeal mark, our senses assure us: is this character, then, impressed on the understanding, on the heart, or the imagination? For the idea of a character which modifies and changes nothing, is as unintelligible to me as the doctrine of transubstantiation.

What the writer means by appropriating to himself and his brethren the exclusive right of setting a churchman at defiance, is equally mysterious, especially as clogged with this condition, "as long as he can establish his propositions by sufficient proof." A wonderful prerogative indeed! By setting him at defiance, he intends that he is secure of confuting his arguments, which it seems he is able to effect so long as he can

establish the opposite propositions by sufficient proof. What is this more than affirming, that he is certain of being able to prove, what he can prove? and as the churchman can certainly do the same; they may each enjoy, upon this principle, the pleasure of mutual defiance and mutual triumph.

He either insults the understanding of his readers by the enunciation of a truism, or he means to assert that the practice he has undertaken to defend, is so identified with the principles of dissent, that it is incapable of being maintained without it. The falsehood of this assumption has been sufficiently evinced already; in addition to which, the reader is requested to reflect on the extreme imprudence of attempting to rest a controversy of such magnitude, on so precarious a basis; and to divide and distract a common cause, by encumbering it with the debate on baptism, and the verbal subtleties of strict communion. To such a mode of defence, the churchman might justly reply—Physician heal thyself: convince your own denomination of the correctness of your reasoning, before you presume to trouble us with the mysteries of your cabala.

Mr. Kinghorn, in his zeal for baptism, intimates his conviction that the admission of infants to that ordinance, will at once legitimate the constitution of the established church, and render a secession from it indispensable. He quotes, with apparent approbation, a long passage from Bishop Hall, intended to shew that if the baptism of the church

is valid, its constitution must be so also, which he prefaces by applauding that prelate's discernment, in seeing clearly their intimate connexion. "All your Rabbins," says the bishop, "cannot answer the charge of your rebaptized brother. If we be a true church you must return; if we be not, (as a false church is no church of God,) you must rebaptize; if our baptism be good, then is our constitution good."* Nothing can be more futile than this mode of arguing, which merely proves that the good bishop, with all his brilliance of genius, was but an indifferent reasoner. He thought himself justified in dissenting from the church of Rome, notwithstanding her baptism was ever esteemed valid. By the ancient church, through all successive ages from the council of Nice, the rebaptization even of heretics was condemned; though heretics were certainly not esteemed a part of the church. The very society of which the bishop was a member, has always professed to consider baptism, administered by every class of dissenters, in the name of the Trinity, as valid;† so that if the reasoning extolled by Mr. Kinghorn is just, he was guilty of schism in refusing to unite, at one and the same time, with heretics, Roman catholics, and dissenters.

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 122.

† See Sir John Nicholl's Judgement delivered 11 Dec. 1809, in the case Kemp against Wickes, for refusing to bury an infant child who had been baptized by a dissenting minister.—Ed.

Not satisfied with asserting that our principles militate against the lawfulness of dissent, he maintains that they are inconsistent with protestantism, and that, by necessary consequence, they convict Luther and his associates of schism and rebellion. In the treatise on *Terms of Communion*, it had been urged, that if we believe our pædobaptist brethren to be in a state of salvation, we must acknowledge them as a part of the true church, and that to refuse them communion, is to create a schism in the body. Applying this reasoning to the case of the Roman catholics, he attempts to repel it, by remarking that if "we have no right to refuse their communion with us, till they conform to what we are convinced is the will of Christ, we had no right to leave them because they deviated from his will. The ground is in both cases *the same*. Once take away the obligation of conforming to the will of Christ, and the reformation is declared a mischievous insurrection, in which all protestants are involved as aiding and abetting a needless and schismatical project."*

To this I reply, that to suppose us to take away the obligation of conforming *in our own persons* to the will of Christ, is to suppose us no longer christians. For, to deny the obligation of obedience, is at once to deny his authority; which is equivalent to a formal renunciation of christianity.

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 55.

But if he means that we are obliged to demand in others a perfect compliance with his will, as a term of communion, he takes away the possibility of toleration; for we can be said to tolerate nothing but what we disapprove, and we can assign no other reason for our disapprobation, besides its apparent repugnance to the mind of Christ. His argument, therefore, is entirely nugatory. It is acknowledged that the lawfulness of admitting a Roman catholic to *our* communion, supposing him to be a real christian, is a necessary inference from our principles; but to conclude from thence that we are obliged to adhere to *his*, is demonstrably false and sophistical; nor is there the least pretence for asserting that the "ground in both cases is the same." Of two actions which involve consequences infinitely different, it is impossible the ground should be the same. To receive a pious Roman catholic to our communion, implies nothing more than an acknowledgement of his being a member of Christ, which is true by the supposition: to commune with him in the rites peculiar to the Romish church, is to be guilty of gross idolatry and superstition, which, however pardonable it may be in him, whose conscience is uninformed, in me who have no such plea, would be damnable. Luther was necessitated to depart from the external communion of the church of Rome, if he would not partake in her corruptions, because her communion formed a principal part

of those corruptions. Besides, since that church maintains the infallibility of all her decisions, and whoever ventures to promulgate a doubt respecting a tittle of her doctrine, is *ipso facto* excommunicated till he recants, when the light of truth revealed to Luther her enormities, it was not left to his option to continue in her society, or not, unless he would involve himself in the guilt of most horrid prevarication. He never pretended to depart from the Romish church absolutely, and in every thing, but in those particulars only, in which she had corrupted the doctrine of the gospel, and adulterated the worship of God; and, however highly he might estimate the advantages of unity, he could not purchase them at the expense of a good conscience, nor dare, by assenting to error, or concurring in superstition and idolatry, "to do evil that good might come." But if a catholic, of whose piety he entertained no doubt, had offered himself for communion with him, without recanting popery on the one hand, or proposing to innovate in the worship of God on the other, on such a supposition, if Luther had refused to receive him, his conduct might have been justly censured. Now, I would put it to the conscience of any impartial person, to determine whether Luther would have had precisely the *same reasons* for declining this act of toleration, as for refusing his approbation of indulgencies, or his adoration of the mass. In exercising the

forbearance in question, he would have merely attested the piety of the communicant; in the other case, he would have directly countenanced and supported what he esteemed impiety and idolatry. With him who is prepared to assert, that each of these methods of proceeding are equally criminal, it is in vain to dispute; but if they are not, the assertion that the *ground* in both cases is the same, is undeniably false.

Having detected the palpable sophistry, by which my opponent would evince the inconsistency of our principles with the cause of protestantism and of dissent, it remains only for me to remind him of the facility with which the argument may be retorted, and of the striking resemblance between the system of strict communion, and that which is maintained by the churches of England, and of Rome.

1. The Romish church, it is well known, pretends to an absolute infallibility; not, however, in such a sense as implies an authority to introduce new doctrine, but merely in the proposal of apostolic traditions, and in the interpretation of scripture. While she admits the scripture to be the original rule of faith, she requires, under pain of excommunication, that the sense she puts on its words, should be received with the same submission with the inspired volume. In what respects, let me ask, is the conduct of the *strict* baptists different? A controversy arises on the

extent of a positive rite, whether it should be confined to adults, or be communicated to infants. Both parties appeal to the scripture, which the baptist interprets (in my humble opinion) correctly, in such a manner as to restrict it to believers; the pædobaptist, with equal sincerity, supposes it to include infants. While the former in his own practice confines it to the description of persons to whom he judges it to belong, he acts with unexceptionable propriety; but when, not satisfied with this, he insists upon forcing his interpretation on the conscience of his brother, and treats him precisely in the same manner as though he avowedly contradicted Christ and his apostles, what is this but an assumption of infallibility? All that infallibility which the church of Rome pretends to, is the right of placing her interpretation of scripture on a level with the word of God: she professes to promulgate no new revelation, but solely to render her sense of it imperative and binding: and if we presume to treat our fellow-christians, merely because they differ from us in their construction of a positive precept, as unworthy of being *recognised* as Christ's disciples, (the very words of this writer,) and disqualified for the communion of saints; if we allow them "faith," while we deny them "obedience," and affirm them not to "revere Christ's authority, submit to his ordinances, or obey the laws of his house," we defy all the powers of discrimination

to ascertain the difference of the two cases, or to assign a reason why we must ascribe the claim of infallibility to one, and not to the other.

On another occasion Mr. Kinghorn observes,* that the strict baptists shew they understand the distinction between *judging for others,* and acting on their own responsibility. But in imposing their own sense of scripture on their brethren, and affirming that on account of their differing from them, they do not "revere the authority of Christ," is either *judging for others,* in every possible sense of the words, or the writer has made an impossible supposition. He adds, they allow that the pædobaptists, *on their own principles,* do right in forming themselves into churches, and in commemorating the death of their Lord. And must they not do equally right, *on their own principles,* in baptizing infants, unless he will assert that the propriety of baptizing infants is not their principle? If judging for others is supposed to involve a claim of infallibility, and on that account, and that alone, to be shunned, to attempt to vindicate the practice of our opponents from that imputation will baffle the acutest intellect.

2. We have already observed the coincidence of our opponent's system with the doctrine of the *opus operatum,* or the intrinsic and mechanical efficacy of religious rites independent of the in-

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 67.

tention and disposition of the worshipper. The Roman catholic attaches such importance to the rite of baptism, as to believe that when duly administered, it is *necessarily* accompanied with the pardon of sin and regenerating grace. The strict baptist maintains that its absence, where all other religious qualifications are possessed in the highest perfection, which human nature admits, deprives the party of "the privileges of faith,"* and renders him an alien from the christian church.

Both the church of Rome, and the church of England, have *devised terms of communion of their own,* and rendered it necessary for their members to comply with innumerable things, besides those which Christ has enjoined as requisite to salvation. The lawfulness and propriety of doing so, is the *palmarium argumentum,* the main pillar and support of strict communion. Let this principle once be abandoned, and the present controversy is at an end, unless our opponents choose to assume new ground, by affirming the necessary connexion between baptism, as they administer it, and the attainment of eternal life; and that they should not perceive the absolute necessity of proceeding so far, in order to be consistent, seems to approach to a judicial infatuation.

3. The adherents to the papal power claim to themselves the exclusive appellation of the *church:*

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 30.

the arrogance of which pretension is faithfully copied by the advocates of strict communion. The former, however, by confining salvation within her own pale, avoid the absurdity into which the latter fall; who, while they affirm that the great body of the faithful are not entitled to that appellation, are obliged to distinguish between the mystical body of Christ and his church, which the Scriptures expressly affirm to be one and the same.

## CHAP. VI.

*The Propriety of Appealing in this Controversy to the peculiar Principles of the Pœdobaptists, briefly examined and discussed.*

It is due, in my apprehension, to the majesty of truth, that she should be defended only by truth, and that we should on all occasions abstain from attempting to increase her partizans by corrupt suffrages. Such are the suffrages she may accidentally gain, by the influence of error. As she scorns to employ the aid of violence, which is foreign to her nature, so, much less will she condescend to owe any portion of her ascendency to falsehood, which it is her eternal prerogative to confound and to destroy. He who wishes to enlighten the human mind, will disdain to appeal to its prejudices, and will rather hazard the rejection of his opinions, than press them as a necessary corollary from misconceptions and mistakes. If the decision of controverted questions is to be subjected to vote, and a superiority of numbers is to pronounce a verdict, the means by which they are procured is a matter of indifference: he who is most successful in enlisting popular humours

and prejudices on his side, will infallibly secure the victory. To all legitimate argument, however, it is essential for the parties concerned to reason on principles admitted by both; to take their stand upon common ground, and to adopt no medium of proof, of the truth of which, he who suggests it is not satisfied.

How far Mr. Kinghorn's management of the controversy corresponds with these just requisitions, the impartial reader will be at no loss to determine. In his zeal to increase the number of his partizans, he makes frequent and urgent appeals to the pædobaptists, with whom the point at issue can rarely, if ever, become a practical question, and who are, therefore, little interested in its decision. As they admit, without hesitation, the validity of our baptism, the question whether the right administration of that ordinance be an essential requisite to communion, has no immediate relation to the economy of their churches: it interests them only in the case of those individuals who may be desirous of communing with baptist societies. As far as it concerns the necessity of that particular rite by which we are characterized, it is a controversy in which we are the only parties; and, however much we venerate the judgement of the religious public, we cannot forget that their motives to a rigorous examination of the question, bear no proportion to ours. To them it is a theoretical inquiry, to us a practical one of the most

serious moment. If, in appealing to them, however, Mr. Kinghorn had constructed his reasoning on principles common to baptists and pædobaptists, there had been no room for complaint. But, instead of this, he enumerates and marshals, with such anxiety, all the appendages of infant baptism, all it assumes, and all it infers, as so many irrefragable arguments for his hypothesis, that were we to judge of his sentiments from these passages alone, we should suppose him as tremblingly alive to the consistency of pædobaptists, as Eli to the preservation of the ark. He adjures them by every thing which they deem sacred in their system, not to forsake him in the conflict, reminding them that if they do so, they must abandon a multitude of positions which they have been accustomed to maintain against the baptists, (that is, against himself,) and be compelled to relinquish the field. He therefore exhorts them to be faithful unto death, in the defence of error, and to take care that no arts, blandishments, or artifices, seduce them to concessions which would embarrass them in their warfare, and render the cause of infant baptism less tenable. Thus he reminds them that by admitting the principle for which we contend, they must relinquish their plea for baptizing infants, on the ground of its "giving the seed of believers a partial membership, which is recognised and completed when they profess their faith in maturer years. Thus one leading popular

representation of its utility is given up." This infant membership, however, he elsewhere exclaims against, as the very precursor of antichrist, the inlet to almost every abomination; and this popular representation, he considers as a most dangerous fiction.* He tells them, that were he a pædobaptist, and disposed to adopt my theory, he should be afraid of being pressed with the question, Of what use is infant baptism?† It is unnecessary to remind the reader, that in the opinion of Mr. Kinghorn it is of none whatever, but a most pernicious abuse of a christian ordinance. But, what is more lamentable still, he warns them that if "they enter into the spirit of our representation, they will be in danger of neglecting it altogether, and consequently either abandon the whole institution, or be induced by the examination of scripture, to become baptists;" that they will be "guilty of a complete deviation from the principles of their predecessors; that they must find new arguments for their infant baptism; and that without attempting to divine what they may be, their cause will be materially injured by the acknowledgement of the necessity of adopting new modes of defence." All this appears very strange from the pen of a zealous baptist, who contemplates every one of the doctrines which he appeals to, with unqualified

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 17.

† Ibid. p. 22.

abhorrence; and who must be aware that just in proportion to the degree of their repugnance to the practice of mixed communion, is the presumptive evidence in its favour. To attempt the recommendation of his theory, by insisting on the impossibility of reconciling it with what is, in his opinion, a system of delusion, indicates something nearly resembling the unrestrained impetuosity of a mind so intent upon the end, as to be indifferent about the means, and savours more of the art and sophistry of a pleader, than of the simplicity which characterizes a sober inquirer after truth. My knowledge of the author forbids the slightest suspicion of any deliberate intention to mislead; but in my humble apprehension he has been betrayed by the warmth of debate, and the intemperate sallies of his zeal, into the use, to adopt the mildest expression, of unhallowed weapons; and, by courting an alliance with error, degraded his cause.

It is probable he will attempt to justify his proceeding, by saying he has merely availed himself of an *argumentum ad hominem*. But he has greatly exceeded the limits assigned to that species of argument, which may be very properly employed to repel a particular objection of an opponent, by shewing that it recoils upon himself, but should never be laid at the basis of a process of reasoning, because the utmost it can effect is to evince the inconsistency of two opinions, without

determining which, or whether either of them, is true.

But it is not merely to acknowledged errors that the author appeals, with a view to discourage our pædobaptist brethren from uniting with us; he also endeavours to rouse into action a feeling, which, whatever name he may think fit to give it, is, in my apprehension, neither more nor less than pride. He remarks, that, in joining with us, they must either "consider themselves as unbaptized, or satisfied with their own baptism, whatever we may think of it, or as agreeing with the maxim, that baptism, in any form, is of no consequence to communion." The first of these suppositions he very properly puts aside as impossible. The second, he reminds them, is "*degrading*, because they permit themselves to be considered as persons who have not fulfilled the will of the Lord, in the very point in which they believe they have fulfilled it. They, consequently, unite with us on terms of inferiority; and he who refuses to commune with us, because, in so doing, he tacitly allows himself to be considered as not so complete a disciple of Jesus as he thinks he is, acts a part which is justifiable and dignified."* The amount of this reasoning is, that whenever a christian perceives that his brother entertains a less favourable opinion of his conduct in any

* Baptism a Term of Communion, pp. 115, 116.

particular than he himself does, he is bound to renounce his communion; because, in every such instance, he must be considered as not so complete a disciple as *he* thinks he is, and to allow himself to be so considered, is a meanness. And from hence, another consequence infallibly results, that no two christians ought to continue in communion, between whom there subsists the smallest diversity of judgement, respecting any point of practical religion; for since each of them, supposing them sincere, must believe his own practice more agreeable to the will of Christ than his brother's, that brother must be aware that he is considered as not so complete a disciple as he judges himself to be, to which, it seems, it is degrading to submit. The author may be fairly challenged to produce a single example of a disagreement amongst christians, to which this reasoning will not apply; and, therefore, admitting it to be just, he has established a canon which prohibits communion wherever there is not a perfect unanimity in interpreting the precepts of Christ; which he, who reflects on the incurable diversity of human opinions, will acknowledge is equivalent to rendering communion impossible.

Although the instance under immediate consideration respects a point of practice, the conclusion will hold equally strong in relation to doctrinal subjects. For, not to remind the reader that different opinions, on practical points, are, in effect,

different doctrines, and that the whole disagreement with our pædobaptist brethren originates in these, it is undoubtedly true of points of simple belief, as well as of christian duties, that, whoever adopts a sentiment different from that of his fellow-christians, must, by the latter, be regarded as in an error; and, since revelation claims faith, as well as obedience, "not so complete a disciple as he thinks he is," to which, if it is degrading for him to submit, his only remedy is to depart, and quit the communion. A fine engine truly for dissolving every christian society into atoms, and for rendering the church of Christ the most proud, turbulent, and contentious of all human associations!

If it be alleged that Mr. Kinghorn's reasoning was not designed to apply to the smaller differences which may arise, but only to grave and weighty matters, such as the nature of a christian ordinance, the obvious answer is, that it is of no consequence to us for what it was designed, but whether it be sound and valid; in other words, whether it be a sufficient reason for a pædobaptist's refusing to join with us, that in "so doing he allows himself to be considered as not so complete a disciple as he thinks he is." If it be, the consequences we have deduced will inevitably follow.

Not satisfied, however, with denouncing the union of pædobaptists with us as "undignified,"

and as placing themselves on terms of "inferiority," he begs them to consider whether it is not a "surrender of their principles in a manner altogether inconsistent with their views of the law of Christ." This surrender, he proceeds to inform us, consists in their "agreeing to be considered as unbaptized, which is contrary to the opinion which they entertain of themselves." We certainly make no scruple of informing a pædobaptist candidate, that we consider him as unbaptized, and disdain all concealment upon the subject; but how his consent to join us on these terms involves an unworthy surrender of his principles, is very mysterious. His principle is, that infant baptism, which we believe to be a human invention, is a part of the will of Christ. Now, how his allowing us to believe this, without breaking with us on that account, amounts to a dereliction of it, is a riddle which it would require an Œdipus to solve. May he not retain his sentiments, and believe us in an error; and is not his continuing unbaptized a demonstrative proof that he does so? And while this is the case, and he manifests his opinion, both by words and actions, is he still guilty of this fearful surrender?

Besides, what will it avail him to leave our communion, since our opinion still pursues him; and though he should retire to the ends of the earth, we shall still continue to think "he has not fulfilled the law of Christ in the very point

in which he believes himself to have fulfilled it." There is no conceivable remedy; he must digest the affront as he can; but why he should feel it so insupportable, only in the case of our proposing to "receive" him, is passing strange, except the author supposes him to be of so canine a temper as to be the most dangerous when most caressed.

It is amusing to see the happy versatility of the author, and with what dexterity he can adapt his viands to the taste and palate of every guest. When it was his object to load, with all possible odium, the conduct of the baptists, in admitting the members of other denominations, he professes to discern an essential disparity betwixt their conduct and ours. We, he tells us, are "more to blame than the pædobaptists that join with us: they surrender no principle; they do not unite with those whom *they* deem unbaptized."* He was then all intent on reproaching us; when he has to deal with the pædobaptists, he feels no scruple in awarding them the same measure. "The inquiry," he says, "will irresistibly arise, if they really and heartily believe that infant baptism is an institution of Christ, Why do they wish to unite with people by whom one of his institutions is, in their view, so manifestly opposed? How can they, in justice to their families, unite with baptists?"

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 68.

"Let them," he says on another occasion, "consider whether they act wisely, or *consistently*, if they join with baptists, who receive them on these grounds. If, on their part, it is connected with a *sacrifice of principle*, they will confess that it is indefensible." * By these grounds, he means, on the supposition that baptism is not an essential prerequisite to communion, which, he is aware, is the principle on which we rest our vindication, and which is certainly perfectly consistent with their conviction of *our* being baptized; the very circumstance he urged before as a proof that they *sacrificed no principle*.

From a writer who so palpably contradicts himself, it were vain to expect any information on this branch of the subject; since it is impossible to conjecture whether the union of our pædobaptist brethren does, or does not, involve a surrender of principle, in the judgement of him who affirms both. On impartial inquiry, it will probably be found, that though no principle is violated on either side, as much candour is evinced on the part of pædobaptists, in consenting to a union, as on ours. If we join with those whom we are obliged to consider as unbaptized, they unite with persons who, in their judgement, repeat an ordinance which ought to be performed but once; nullify a christian institute, and deprive

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 114.

their children of the benefit of a salutary rite. And since the subjects of baptism are far more numerous on their system than on ours, why should they be less offended at our neglect of these, than we are at their extending the ordinance too far? Whoever attaches importance to the covenant into which God is supposed to enter with the seed of believers, must highly disapprove the conduct of the parent who withholds from his offspring its instituted seal; nor is it possible for him to cherish the esteem due to him as a christian, but by imputing his conduct to involuntary error. The supposed cruelty, also, of refusing to insert an innocent babe into the Abrahamic stock; the impiety of profaning a christian sacrament by rebaptizing, might be made the subject of tragic declamation, with as much propriety as *their* want of "reverence to the authority of Christ, and disobedience to the laws of his house." If we must tolerate none who are guilty of omitting a divine law, (which is the doctrine of Mr. Kinghorn,) how is it possible for a pædobaptist to bear with us, who live in the perpetual neglect of what his principles compel him to consider in that light?

In the judgement of all other denominations, while we neglect to dedicate our offspring to God in the solemnization of a federal rite, however conscientious we may be, we can but very imperfectly imitate the example of Abraham, of whom

the Omniscient testified that he "would command his children, and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord;" or that of Zechariah and Elisabeth, "who walked in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless." On a fair comparison, it is difficult to determine which party is most entitled to the praise of candour; where both evince a noble oblivion of minor partialities and attachments, made to yield to the force of christian charity, and disappear before the grandeur of the common salvation.

# PART III.

IN WHICH THE INSUFFICIENCY OF THE REPLY MR. KINGHORN HAS MADE TO THE PRINCIPAL ARGUMENTS URGED FOR MIXED COMMUNION IS EXPOSED.

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## CHAP. VII.

*His Reply to the Argument deduced from the Scriptural Injunction of Mutual Forbearance and Brotherly Love, considered.*

RELUCTANT as the author is to prolong the present controversy to a tedious length, he can neither do justice to his cause, nor to himself, unless he notices the attempt which his opponent has made to enervate the force of his arguments: and here he will be under the necessity of recurring to the principal topics insisted upon in the former treatise.

That dissensions in the christian church were not unknown in the earliest period of christianity, is evident from the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles of St. Paul, who employed himself much

in attempting to compose them; and the principal method he adopted was, to enjoin mutual forbearance, to inculcate the duty of putting the most favourable construction on each other's sentiments, and not suffer these differences to alienate their affections from each other, "whom Christ had received," who were his accepted servants, and would be permitted to share in his glory.* From these premises we argue thus: Since St. Paul assigned as a reason for the mutual forbearance of christians, that they were equally accepted of Christ, it was undoubtedly a *sufficient* one, and, admitting it to be such, it must extend to all who are in the same predicament (who are in the same state of acceptance;) and, as it is allowed on both sides, that pædobaptists are in a state of salvation, and consequently accepted of Christ, the same reason which dictated the measure of toleration at that period, must apply with equal force to the debate which at present subsists between us and other denominations. In this argument the conclusion seems so nearly identified with the premises, that we might suppose the most artful sophistry would despair of confuting it, and that the only objection it were liable to, would be its attempting to prove what is self-evident.

Let us now turn to Mr. Kinghorn. It was observed in my former treatise, that the question

* Rom. xiv. 1—6.

is not, What were the individual errors we are commanded to tolerate? but, What is the *ground* on which that measure is enforced, and whether it be sufficiently comprehensive to include the pædobaptists? After quoting this passage, he subjoins, "*this is the question at issue,* and the decision of this will determine whether the spirit of the precepts of the gospel will sanction us in departing from apostolical precedents, especially when such precedents arose from obedience to a divine command."* He then proceeds to investigate the precise nature of the dissensions which prevailed in the primitive churches; from whence he infers that the disparity betwixt them, and our controversy with the pædobaptists, is such, that the principle on which the apostles enforced toleration, is not "applicable." The expression he here employs, is somewhat equivocal. It may either mean, that the phrase "God hath received him," does not apply to the pædobaptists, or that, supposing it does, it is not sufficient to sustain the inference we deduce, which is their right to fellowship. To interpret his meaning in the latter sense, however, would be to suppose him guilty of impeaching the validity of St. Paul's argument, who rests the obligation of forbearance with the party whose cause he advocates, precisely on that ground. "*For* God hath received him." It is also

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 40.

inconsistent with his own statement, as given in the following passage, where he paraphrases the words just quoted in the following manner:— "There is nothing in the gospels, but what the Jews can believe and obey, though they retain their national partialities to the law; and, therefore, since God does not reject them, but receives them into the christian dispensation, you should receive them also. But then, he adds, he receives them on their *believing and obeying the gospel;* and it is neither stated nor supposed that he receives them, notwithstanding they disobey it. And unless this be proved, the cause of mixed communion is not promoted."* We have here an explicit avowal that he considers none besides the baptists as received of Christ, in the sense the apostle intends, accompanied with a concession, that to prove they were, would furnish an irrefragable argument for our practice.

It was certainly not without reason that he apologized for taking different ground from Mr. Booth; for here he is directly at issue with the venerable apologist. *He* frankly acknowledges the fact which Mr. Kinghorn challenges us to prove; but attempts to evade the conclusion by remarking, "that it is not every one that is received of Jesus Christ, who is entitled to communion at his table, but such, and such only, as revere his

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 45.

authority,"* &c. Amidst the contradictory statements of such formidable champions, who can only agree in their censures of us, while they are at variance among themselves respecting the most fundamental points—where one tells us we are not to commune with other denominations, though they *are* received by Christ, and the other because they are *not* received,—what course must he, who looks up with profound veneration to these great authorities, take? Where both propose to conduct him to the same place, but one directs him to the east, the other to the west, my humble advice is, to believe neither, but to exercise that liberty of thinking for himself, to which he is strongly invited by the perplexity and confusion of his guides.

Our present concern, however, is with Mr. Kinghorn, who denies that pædobaptists are received by Christ, in the sense which St. Paul intended in the passage under consideration; while he agrees with us, that it is upon that principle that primitive toleration rested.

Let it be remembered that, while Mr. Booth interprets the word *received*, as signifying received into the divine favour, Mr. Kinghorn contends for its meaning admitted into the church. But since many things must of necessity precede the act of external communion, and every believer must be

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 62.

supposed, in some important sense, to be previously received of Christ, he qualifies, or explains his former language, by adding, "he receives them into the christian dispensation."*

Let me crave the indulgence of the reader, while we endeavour to sift this matter to the bottom.

1. Whatever disparity may be contended for between the ancient dissensions and the modern dispute with the pædobaptists, it can by no means amount to a proof that the latter are *not* comprehended under the clause in question (God hath received him). To reason thus—there were certain

* For the satisfaction of the reader, who may not possess Mr. Kinghorn's book, it may be proper to give the whole passage to which my reply is directed.

"Besides, the expression, God hath received him, ver. 8. deserves consideration. It clearly applies, as it is stated by the apostle, to the reception of the Gentiles; and is an argument with the Jewish christians, not to reject those brethren who eat all things. And suppose it to be granted that the expression applies to both parties, (which appears intended in chap. xv. 7.) the sense, then, is evidently this, God receives not Gentiles *only*, but *also* Jews into the christian church, though they are encumbered with their Jewish prejudices. There is nothing in the gospel but what Jews can believe and obey, though they retain their national partialities to the law; and, therefore, since God does not reject them, but receives them into the christian dispensation, you should receive them also. But then he receives them *on their believing and obeying the gospel*, and it is neither stated or supposed that he receives them *notwithstanding they disobey it*. And unless this be proved, the cause of mixed communion is not promoted."—*Baptism a Term of Communion*, p. 45.

errors among the primitive professors which did not bar their admission into the church, but the error of the pædobaptist is of a very different kind, and therefore it must have that effect—would be to reason most inconclusively; since all that can be justly inferred is, that it possibly *may* have that effect, though the former had not, the utmost point to which the argument, from the dissimilarity of the two cases, is capable of being carried is that the latter may possibly not be comprehended under the same rule: but whether our author has not disqualified himself from urging it, will be the subject of future inquiry.

2. The medium by which he attempts to establish his conclusion, is manifestly untenable, unless he chooses to retract a large portion of his treatise. His argument is this, that God receives "such, and only such, as believe and obey the gospel;" but *other denominations* disobey it, and are therefore not entitled to that privilege. Here, however, he is at issue with a greater than Booth—with the apostles themselves, one of whom declares that Christ "will appear in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that *obey not the gospel;*" and another, classes such as *obey it not,* among the "ungodly and sinners," whom he solemnly warns of their fearful end. Either, then, the apostles were wrong, in denouncing destruction on such as *do not obey* the gospel; or Mr. Kinghorn, in loading the pædobaptists with that charge, while

he expresses a confidence of their salvation. Nor will it avail him, in the least, to say they do not obey it perfectly; for we should feel no hesitation in retorting the charge, and affirming that, had he done so, he would not have penned this passage.

3. As he must, on his system, distinguish betwixt being in a state of salvation, and "*being received into the christian dispensation,*" there are a few questions, to which we should be glad to receive an explicit answer. He will acknowledge, we presume, that every believer is first united to Christ, and received by him, before he is entitled to the external communion of his church; that his right to the latter is founded on the credible evidence he gives of his interest in the first of these privileges. If this be admitted, it must hold equally true respecting the Jewish and Gentile converts, whose mutual toleration is enjoined in the passage under dispute. Now I ask, *according to what dispensation* were these primitive believers united to Christ, and accepted of him, *previous* to their external communion? Was it according to the christian dispensation, or some other? If the reply is, the christian; I ask again, are our pædobaptist brethren in possession of the same privileges as were enjoyed by the primitive converts, before their external communion with the church? If they are not, they are not entitled to the appellation of christians in any sense, and consequently

could not be admitted to communion, even though they were baptized. If, on the other hand, it is acknowledged that they are possessed of the same privileges, the question returns, *by what dispensation* are they held? If he denies it to be by the christian, I ask once more, how he acquired this persuasion of their possessing the privileges in question? He surely will not pretend to have obtained it in any other way than by an attentive perusal of the New Testament, by comparing the character of pious pædobaptists with that of the primitive christians, as well as with the marks and criterions by which it has directed us to judge of a state of salvation; so that the favourable opinion he professes to entertain, must rest on the evidence which the principles of the christian dispensation supply. But to say that the maxims of that dispensation oblige him to believe that a class of persons are interested in its promises, whom that very dispensation does not comprehend, although they live under it, is a contradiction in terms. It is equivalent to asserting, that the gospel economy passes opposite sentences on the same persons, and affords evidence for their seclusion and admission, at one and the same moment. It seems evident to a demonstration, then, that agreeable to his own concessions, *other denominations*, as well as our own, are received into the christian dispensation; that by virtue of its essential principles, they are entitled to its immunities and privileges,

and have consequently a right to the external communion of saints, on a double account; first, because such communion is one of its distinguishing benefits, and next, because they are included amongst the persons whom the Head of the church has received, which our author interprets, by being admitted into the christian dispensation.

For the same reason, all that he has said elsewhere, of our not being authorized, by the New Testament, to recognise them as the disciples of Christ, necessarily falls to the ground; for, since he can have no pretence for believing them in a state of salvation, except on the information derived from the New Testament, which certainly promises salvation to none but Christ's disciples; we are not only allowed but impelled by that highest authority, to recognise them under that character. His attempt to nullify their profession is also rendered completely abortive; for, not to repeat what was before urged, since they profess neither more nor less than to adhere to the christian dispensation, it will not be denied, that, if they are actually received into it, that profession is valid.

Let it be remembered, that, in deducing these consequences, we have allowed him to interpret the disputed phrase in his own way, without contending for the sense which is most agreeable to the context, as well as most favourable to our

hypothesis; and without attempting to impugn the accuracy of his representation, of the dissensions and disputes which occasioned the injunction, and gave scope to the exercise of primitive forbearance.

4. Though that inquiry might be well spared, without injury to our argument, yet his account of these ancient controversies is so egregiously partial, so palpably designed to serve an hypothesis, that truth forbids me to suffer it to pass without animadversion. In a long and perplexed dissertation, he endeavours to establish a distinction between indulging a needless scrupulosity in doing what is not commanded, and disobeying an express precept; contending that the errors which St. Paul tolerated were of the former sort, and that, as they merely respected certain observances and customs, neither forbidden nor enjoined, they were to be considered as *αδιαφορα*, things indifferent, about which the christian religion is silent. He compares them to disputes about the planetary system, where it is free for every person to form his own judgement, and either to believe, with the vulgar, that the sun literally moves round the earth every four and twenty hours, or the earth round the sun, agreeable to the principles of modern astronomy.*

* "The case is very similar," he says, "to the following:—At no great distance of time back, the popular opinion was, that the earth was a fixed body, and that the sun and stars made not an

In order to elucidate the question before us, it will be proper briefly to state the different modes of proceeding adopted by the Jewish converts respecting the Mosaic ceremonies, at the earliest period of Christianity. That they were universally practised by believers of Jewish extraction, is manifest from various parts of scripture; and, with respect to the church at Jerusalem, is expressly affirmed by St. James. "Thou seest, brother," said he, addressing Paul, "how many thousand Jews there are who believe, and they are all zealous for the law." The apostle of the Gentiles, with all his zeal in the assertion of their liberties, conformed to them himself; partly from

apparent, but an actual, revolution round the earth. The contrary appeared so unlikely, so contrary to daily observation, that numbers knew not how to admit it. Some reasoned; 'others took a shorter way, and laughed at what they thought was absurd; another party appealed to the Bible as settling the point, by asserting that the sun *did* rise, and *did* set, and on one distinguished day was commanded to stand still. Good men were to be found on both sides of the question. Suppose now that some serious characters in the christian church, tenacious believers that the *earth stood still*, and that it was the *sun* that *moved*, had occasioned a little unpleasant controversy, with some of their brethren that were better informed; and the latter, provoked at their remarks, were for excommunicating them, for want of sense, if not for want of religion, how fitly would the apostle's reasoning apply! It might be said exactly on these principles, these good men are not chargeable with breaking *any divine law*: their whole crime is that they are bad astronomers, and talk nonsense; but 'God hath received them;' do you therefore receive them in the spirit of meekness and love."—*Baptism a Term of Communion*, pp. 49, 50.

respect to the Jewish people, whom he was most anxious, by every lawful compliance, to conciliate, and partly from a tender consideration of the infirmities of his weaker brethren, not yet sufficiently confirmed in the freedom of the gospel. "To the Jews he became a Jew, that he might win the Jews." But while he displayed this amiable and condescending spirit, he never disguised his conviction, that the obligation attached to the Mosaic rites was dissolved, and that the gospel was alone a perfect rule of faith and practice.

Thus far an attention to the law was justifiable, and founded on the most enlightened principles. Many, however, probably the great majority, proceeded a step further, and observed the legal ceremonies, not as the dictate of prudence, or for the purpose of conciliation, but as matter of conscience, conceiving them to be still in force. These composed that class of believers who are denominated *weak*, whose infirmities the *strong*, christians of a more enlightened order, were commanded to bear with. The error which these persons maintained was of serious magnitude; for, in the very face of an inspired apostle, who affirmed the law of Moses to be abrogated and annulled by the advent of Christ, they still pertinaciously adhered to it, as a matter of personal and indispensable obligation; and, though they attempted to revive and perpetuate an antiquated system, an economy which the gospel had completely superseded, and which

went, by no circuitous route, to impeach the sufficiency and perfection of the latter, their complete toleration was solemnly and repeatedly enjoined on their more enlightened brethren.

This error is compared, by Mr. Kinghorn, to an erroneous system of astronomy, and is, consequently, considered as totally indifferent. But how he could possibly believe this himself, or hope to obtrude it on the credulity of his readers, is astonishing. To attach the sanction of religion to a system which the Supreme Legislator had repealed—to scruple various kinds of meat, at the very moment that St. Paul was testifying the Lord Jesus had shewn him that nothing was unclean of itself; and after Peter had proclaimed the vision by which he was instructed that the distinction of clean and unclean, was abolished, betrayed a degree of superstitious weakness and pertinacity, most foreign from a mistake on a merely scientific subject. Were a converted Jew at present to determine to adhere to the Mosaic ritual, I would ask Mr. Kinghorn whether he would consider his conduct as entitled to the same indulgence as though he scrupled to adopt the Newtonian system of the universe?

Still he will reply, that his error is of a different kind from that of the pædobaptists; he is guilty of no omission of a revealed duty, while they set aside a positive institute of christianity. It is by this distinction, and by this alone, that he attempts

to evade the conclusion to which this example conducts us. There is nothing, however, in reason or in scripture, from which we can infer, that to omit a branch of duty, not understood, is less an object of forbearance, than to maintain the obligation of abrogated rites. Let him assign, if he is able, a single reason why it is less criminal to add to, than to take away from, the law of Christ; to revive an obsolete economy, than to mistake the meaning of a New Testament institute. How will he demonstrate will-worship to be less offensive to God than the involuntary neglect of a revealed precept? It is so much more difficult to prove, than to assert, that we commend his discretion in choosing the easier task.

The above distinction is not only unfounded in the nature of things; it is at direct variance with the reasoning of Paul on the subject. He enjoins the practice of forbearance, on the ground of the *conscientiousness* of the parties concerned, on the assumption, not only of their general sincerity, but of their being equally actuated, in the very particulars in which they differed, by an unfeigned respect to the authority of Christ; and as he urges the same consideration as the ground on which the toleration of both parties rested, it must have included a *something* which was binding on the conscience of each, whatever was his private judgement of the points in debate. The Jew was as much bound to tolerate the Gentile, as the Gentile

the Jew. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. He that observeth a day, observeth it to the Lord: he that observeth not a day, observeth it not to the Lord. He that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not; he that eateth, eateth to the Lord." Now in the judgement of the Jew, still attached to the Mosaic rites, he who made no distinction of meats, or of days, must have been considered as violating or neglecting a precept still in force, or the injunction to refrain from judging him, would have been devoid of meaning. He must have, consequently, been regarded by him in precisely the same light in which our pædobaptist brethren are considered, that is, as violating, though not intentionally, a positive institute. Still St. Paul absolutely insists on the duty of forbearance; and arguing with him on his own principles, he tells him, he has no authority whatever to "*judge*," or deem him unworthy of his fellowship, since he was accepted of Christ, and acted with perfect good conscience in the particular which gave offence. I will leave the impartial reader to determine whether this is not a fair representation of Paul's reasoning, and whether, admitting this, it does not completely annihilate the distinction Mr. Kinghorn attempts to establish, and decide the present controversy as satisfactorily as if it

had been penned for the purpose. It is scarcely possible to suppose he will stoop to avail himself of his only remaining subterfuge, by reminding us that, in the instance before us, the ordinance supposed to be violated was not a *christian* one; since it is obvious that the commands of God, supposing them still in force, are equally binding, at whatever period they are promulgated, or to whatever economy they belong.

It is not, be it remembered, by a peremptory decision of the controversy, or by assigning the victory to one in preference to the other, that the apostle attempts to effect a reconciliation. He endeavours to bring it about, while each retains his peculiar sentiments; from which it is manifest that there was nothing in the views of either party which, in his judgement, formed a legitimate barrier to union. The attachment of the Jew to the observation of the legal ceremonies, was not, in his opinion, a sufficient reason for refusing to unite with him by whom they were disregarded. But in this case, the forbearance which he enjoins was exercised towards a class of persons exactly in the same situation, as far as its principle is concerned, with the modern pædobaptists, that is, towards persons who violated a precept which was still supposed to be in force; and this consequence equally results, whatever statement may be made of the precise object of Jewish toleration, whether it involved disputed practices

among the Jews themselves, or the neglect of the Mosaic ritual by the Gentiles. Hence, in whatever possible view the controversy may be considered, the apostle's treatment of it goes to the complete annihilation of the distinction betwixt the observation of what *is not*, and the neglect of what *is*, commanded; since the *mutual* toleration which was prescribed, embraced both.

There was a third description of Jews who attempted to impose the yoke of ceremonies on Gentiles, "assuring them that unless they were circumcised and kept the law of Moses, they could not be saved." It was this which occasioned the convention of the apostles and elders with the church at Jerusalem, where it was solemnly decided that Gentile converts should enjoy a perfect immunity from legal observances. This formal determination, however, was far from putting an end to the controversy: the efforts of Jewish zealots were probably repressed for a time, but they soon recovered their resolution, and artfully propagated their doctrines with great success in various quarters, and especially among the churches planted in Galatia. On this occasion Paul expressed himself with great vehemence, telling the Galatians that he "could wish that those who troubled them were cut off." By inculcating the law as an indispensable prerequisite to salvation, they annulled the grace of God, subverted the truth of the gospel, and impeached

the sufficiency and validity of the great propitiation. The attempt to place the rites of an economy, which, while it continued, was merely the shadow of good things to come, upon a footing with the living eternal verities of the gospel, was, in effect, to obscure its lustre, and debase its character. That no indulgence was shewn towards the inventors and propagators of this pernicious heresy, is admitted; but it is equally evident that he made a wide distinction between the deceivers and the deceived, between the authors, and the victims of delusion. With the last of these, he reasons, he expostulates; he warns them of the tendency of their errors, and expresses his apprehensions lest he had "bestowed upon them labour in vain." He indignantly asks, Who had bewitched them, that they should not obey the truth; that after beginning in the Spirit, they should end in the flesh; and when they had been replenished with the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, "return again to the weak and beggarly elements." But in the midst of these pointed reproofs, as they were not fully aware of the consequences of their defection, as they were not in a confirmed state of heresy, he continued to treat them with the tenderness of a father, without uttering a breath that might seem like a threat of excommunication.

5. We shall not content ourselves with this answer. We accept Mr. Kinghorn's challenge, and engage to produce an instance of men's being

tolerated in the primitive church, who neglected an express command of Christ, and that of the highest moment. We must only be allowed to assume it for granted, that the apostles were entitled, by the highest right, to be considered as members of the church which they planted, and of which they are affirmed to be the foundation. These very apostles, however, continued for a considerable time to neglect the express command of their Master, relating to a subject of the utmost importance. It will not be denied, that he expressly directed them to go forth immediately after the descent of the Spirit, and to preach the gospel to every creature. Did they immediately attempt to execute this commission? From the Acts of the Apostles we learn that they did not; that for a considerable period, they made no effort to publish the gospel except to the Jews, and that it required a new revelation to determine Peter to execute this order in its full extent, by opening the door of faith to the Gentiles. But for the vision presented at Joppa, from all that appears, the preaching of the word would have been limited in perpetuity to one nation; and when Peter, moved by an immediate voice from heaven, began to impart it to Cornelius and his family, he was vehemently opposed by the church at Jerusalem. So far indeed were the primitive christians from entering into the views of their divine Master, that, when a "number of them

were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, they went as far as Phœnicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the gospel to the Jews only." That highly favoured people, elated with the idea of its religious preeminence, looked down with contempt on other nations; while it appropriated the kingdom of God to itself, as its exclusive patrimony, without suspecting, for a moment, that it was the design of the Almighty, to admit a different race of men to an equal participation of the same privileges. Under the influence of these prejudices, the first heralds of the gospel slowly and reluctantly imbibed its liberal and comprehensive spirit.

Nor is this the only instance in which Mr. Kinghorn himself will be found to approve of the toleration of such as have habitually neglected a positive command. The great majority of our own denomination, influenced principally by the writings of Gill and Brine, admirers of Crisp, held, to a very recent period, that it was improper to urge sinners to repentance, or to enjoin upon them the duty of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.* Their practice, it is needless to add, corresponded with their theory, and they anxiously guarded

* It is but justice to the memory of the great and excellent Fuller, to observe, that it is to his writings chiefly our denomination is indebted, for its emancipation from these miserable shackles and restraints.

The author might have added here, the name of his excellent and venerable father. Ed.

against the inculcation of any spiritual duties whatever, on the unconverted. My respectable opponent is, I am aware, at a great remove from these sentiments; and the main reason he would assign for rejecting them, is that our Saviour commenced his ministry by calling men to repent, and that "he commanded his apostles to testify every where repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." But if such be his reasons, he must acknowledge that the eminent persons before mentioned, in declining to perform what our Lord commanded his apostles, neglected or broke a divine precept. But is he prepared to affirm that they were not members of the church? Will this sturdy champion of the strict baptists be ungracious enough to pass a sentence of excommunication on the majority of his precursors in this controversy? Unless he is prepared for this, he must acknowledge that the right of toleration extends to such as neglect, or violate, a revealed precept. It is unnecessary to remind the reader of the magnitude of the error in question, which would at once have annihilated the apostolic commission, by rendering it impossible to preach the gospel to *any creature,* since there were in the Gentile world none to whom it could, on this principle, be addressed. The whole ceremony of baptism sinks into insignificance in the comparison.

In answer to his challenge we have produced two cases, in which toleration has been extended

to such as neglect, or violate a divine precept; the first taken from the holy apostles, the second from our fathers and predecessors in our own denomination.

The reader is requested to advert to the interminable discord and dissension with which this principle is replete. The principle is, that whenever one christian deems another to live in the neglect and violation of a positive command, however conscientious he may be, he must renounce the communion of the party which he supposes erroneous. Who does not perceive, that the application of such a principle will furnish a pretext for endless dispute and contention; that not only a different interpretation of the law of baptism will be a sufficient occasion of division, but that whoever supposes that any branch of the primitive discipline has fallen into disuse, will feel himself justified, nay, compelled, to kindle the torch of discord, and to separate chief friends? If no latitude is to be allowed in interpreting the will of Christ, no indulgence shewn to such of the faithful, as, from a deficiency of light, neglect and overlook some part of his precepts, how is it possible the practice of reciprocal exclusion should stop within the limits which this author has assigned it? Are there two thinking men to be found, who are fully agreed respecting all the minuter details of christian discipline and worship? Are they fully agreed on the question of what *was* the primitive

discipline, much less, how far a conformity to it is either proper or practicable? Who, that is competent to speak on such subjects, is not aware, that there are no questions involved in greater obscurity than these, none on which the evidence is less satisfactory, and which more elude the researches of the learned, or administer more aliment of dispute to the contentious? One class of christians believes that a plurality of elders is essential to the organization of a church, because the scripture always speaks of them in the plural number; and confident that such is the will of Christ, he dares not recognise as a church, one in which that circumstance is wanting. Another attaches importance to weekly communion, which he justly contends was the uniform practice of the apostles, and of the primitive age: a conformity to which, in this particular, is with him an indispensable condition to communion. A third turns his eyes towards lay exhortations, the disuse of which he considers as practically superseding some of the plainest passages of scripture, quenching the Spirit, and abridging the means of religious improvement; he consequently scruples the communion of those by whom this ordinance is neglected. A fourth adverts to the solemnity with which our Lord exemplified and enjoined the washing of feet, and the frequency with which the apostles inculcated the kiss of charity; and having no doubt that these injunctions are of perpetual

obligation, feels himself necessitated to withdraw from such as by neglecting them "walk disorderly." A fifth contends for the total independence of churches, conceiving that the cognizance of ecclesiastical causes is, by divine right, vested in the people, who are to determine every thing by a majority of votes; in opposition to those who contend for a church representative; and, believing such an arrangement to be an important branch of the will of Christ, he conscientiously refuses the communion of those societies which decline to adopt it.

These different systems are, no doubt, distinguished by different degrees of approximation to truth; but what is of importance to remark, however they may differ in other respects, they agree in this, that upon the principle we are attempting to expose, they furnish, to such as adopt them, just as reasonable a pretext for separate communion, as the disagreement respecting baptism; nor is it possible, if that principle be admitted, to reconcile the independent exercise of intellect, with christian unity. The instances already adduced are a mere scantling of the innumerable questions which would give occasion to a diversity of judgement respecting the mind of Christ, and consequently necessitate the withdrawment of christians from each other. The few societies that have attempted to carry this theory into practice, have already exhibited such a series of feuds and quarrels,

as are amply sufficient to ensure its reprobation; and merely because they have acted more *consistently*, they have acted much worse, than the greater part of the churches who practise strict communion. Let this principle be once established, and fairly acted upon, and there is no question but that divisions will succeed to divisions, and separations to separations, until two persons possessed of freedom of thought will scarcely be found capable of walking together in fellowship; and an image of the infinite divisibility of matter will be exhibited, in the breaking down of churches into smaller and smaller portions. An admirable expedient, truly, for keeping "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace!" That there is no hyperbole in this representation will be obvious, if we do but consider the difficulty of procuring an entire unanimity in the interpretation of those parts of scripture, which are supposed to relate to the will of Christ, in the organization and constitution of his church.

6. There is one important consideration to which the reader is requested to attend, before we dismiss this branch of the subject. My opponent asserts, that none besides our own denomination are comprehended within the clause in which the apostle affirms the reception of erring christians. He acknowledges, that if it can be proved that they are included under that description, the precept of toleration extends to their case, and that the

only question at issue is, whether they *are* so or not, which he, in opposition to Mr. Booth, denies.* The reader is entreated seriously to consider the necessary result of this position, whether it does not amount to a repeal of the Scriptures, considered as the rule of faith and manners. It will not be denied that the promises and precepts of the New Testament are uniformly addressed to the same description of persons, with those particular injunctions under present discussion, and that under the terms *strong* and *weak*, by which are designated the two respective classes, who are commanded mutually to bear with each other. Nor can we hesitate whether the disputed phrase, *God hath received him*, ought to be interpreted in the same extent. As the inscriptions prefixed to the inspired epistles determine to whom they were addressed, so that which was written to the Romans is inscribed to "all that be at Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints;" and not a syllable is found in the precepts respecting mutual forbearance, comprised in the 14th and

* The author of *Terms of Communion* observes, "that the question at issue is not what were the individual errors we are commanded to tolerate, but what is the ground on which that measure is enforced, and whether it be sufficiently comprehensive to include the pædobaptists." In reply to which Mr. Kinghorn sets out with remarking, "I admit *that is the question*, and the decision of this question will determine, whether the precepts of the gospel will sanction us in departing from apostolical precedent," &c.

15th chapters, which limits them to any particular part of that church, in distinction from the whole. They were intended for the universal regulation of the conduct of the members of that community towards each other.

The epistles of the rest of the apostles also, though directed to the inhabitants of different places from that to the Romans, are uniformly ascribed to the same description of persons, as will be manifest on their inspection; or, in other words, the supposed genuine followers of Christ in that age, are the persons to whom the epistolary parts of the New Testament are directed; and consequently, universal precepts enjoined on any one society, must have been considered as equally binding on all the faithful. On any other supposition, each church would have possessed a distinct code, instead of the inspired writings at large being regarded as the universal rule of faith and practice. Hence it follows that the seven churches of Asia, as well as those who were scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, and Cappadocia, supposing them acquainted with the Epistle to the Romans, would have been under the same obligation of observing its injunctions, with the christians at Rome. But among the various precepts, intended to regulate the conduct, of christians, comprised in the code of inspiration, such as enjoin mutual forbearance with each other's imperfections and infirmities, hold a

conspicuous place, and the rule propounded on that occasion we perceive to have been universally obligatory on believers of that generation.

When we propose to extend the same method of proceeding to our pædobaptist brethren, in the present day, we are repelled; and my opponent reminds us, that we are not authorized to assign, in the present case, the reason for forbearance which was urged by St. Paul, because *they are not received*, in the sense which he intended. The reason itself, he acknowledges, would be a sufficient justification, could the fact on which it proceeds be established, but he denies the fact.

Their error, it is asserted, is of such a nature, that it places them totally out of the question, and whatever is said on the subject of mutual forbearance in the New Testament is, in the present state of things, to be considered as applicable merely to the conduct of baptists toward each other; from which it necessarily follows, that no part of the precepts or promises of scripture, can be proved to apply to the great body of believers, at present, not even to such as appear preeminent in piety; for all these precepts and promises were originally addressed precisely to the same description of persons, with the injunctions in question; and, as it is contended that *these* belong at present only to baptists, by parity of reason, the former must be restricted to the same limits. On this principle, there is not a syllable in the New

Testament from which a pædobaptist can derive either consolation or direction, as a christian; not a single promise which he can claim, nor a single duty resulting from the christian calling, with which he is concerned; for the class of persons to whom these were originally addressed, was one and the same with those on whom the duty of mutual forbearance was inculcated.

The inscription of the Epistle to the Romans is of the same extent with the injunctions contained in the 14th and 15th chapters, and no greater; the same description of persons are evidently addressed throughout. It was the *saints*, the *beloved of God*, mentioned in the beginning of the letter, who, on account of their common relation to the Lord, were commanded to bear with each other's infirmities. Now, if it be asserted, that infant baptism is an error so different from those which were contemplated by the Author, in that injunction, that its abettors stand excluded from its benefit, how will it be possible to prove that they are *saints*, that they are *beloved of God*, or that any of the attributes ascribed to christians in that epistle, belong to *them*? Mr. Kinghorn may affirm, if he pleases, that the characteristic descriptions are applicable, while the injunctions under discussion are not. He may affirm, but how will he prove it? since both are addressed to the same persons, and the injunction of forbearance enjoined alike on them all.

From a letter, consisting partly of affectionate congratulations, and partly of serious advice, both intended for the comfort and direction of the same persons, to infer that the congratulations apply to christians of all denominations, and the advice to one only, is capricious and unreasonable. The same conclusion holds good respecting the whole of the New Testament. Whatever is affirmed in any part of it, respecting the privilege of primitive believers, was asserted primarily of such only as were baptized, because there were no others originally in the church; all the reciprocal duties of christians were, in the first instance, enjoined on these; among which we find precepts enforcing, without a shadow of limitation, the duty of cultivating christian fellowship. But the last, our opponents contend, are to be restricted to baptists; whence it necessarily follows, unless we had some independent evidence on the subject, that the former must be restricted in the same manner; and that, consequently, all other denominations, however excellent in other respects, are left without any scriptural proof of their interest in the divine favour, or any directions for that part of their conduct which concerns their christian obligations. Were there, indeed, any other medium of proof besides the writings of the apostles, of equal authority, by which it were possible to supply their deficiency, the case would be different. From this independent source we might possibly

learn the fact, that *other denominations,* also, were included within the promise of eternal life: but while our knowledge on the subject is derived from one book, whose precepts for the regulation of the conduct of believers towards each other universally, are affirmed not to extend to our intercourse with pædobaptists, it is impossible to establish that conclusion; for, to attempt to limit the application of scripture in one part, and to make it universal in another, where both were originally intended to be taken in the same extent, is plainly unreasonable.

## CHAP. VIII.

*On the Argument for Mixed Communion, founded on the Pædobaptists being a Part of the true Church.*

THE author of *Terms of Communion* founded an argument for the admission of sincere christians, of every denomination, to the Lord's table, on their being a part of the true church. He remarked, that whenever that term occurs in scripture, in relation to spiritual matters, it constantly denotes, either members of a particular community, accustomed to meet in one place, or the whole body of real believers, dispersed throughout the world, but considered as united to one head; that this body is expressly affirmed to be the body of Christ, of which every genuine believer is a member; that we are seriously warned against whatever tends to promote a schism in it; and that these admonitions are directly repugnant to the practice, under any pretext whatever, of repelling a sincere christian from communion. If we allow the identity of the church of Christ with his body, which St. Paul expressly affirms, and

which he assumes as the basis of his whole train of reasoning, the conclusion we have drawn results from it so immediately, that the attempt to place it in a clearer light seems a waste of words. If the alienation of affection which prevailed in the church at Corinth was sufficient to constitute a schism, much more is a rupture of communion. But a schism, or division in the body, the apostle deprecates as one of the greatest evils, as tending immediately to its destruction, as well as most repugnant to the scope and genius of christianity. "Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided?"* "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ." Here the unity of the church is most clearly affirmed; and whatever tends to divide it is stigmatized under the notion of an attempt to divide Christ himself.

The reader will probably feel some curiosity to know how Mr. Kinghorn will reconcile his hypothesis with these statements; whether he is prepared, in contradiction to the apostle, to deny the identity of the church of Christ with his body, or whether, acknowledging this, he will yet contend for the necessity of dividing it, in opposition to his solemn injunctions. He will be a little surprised

* 1 Cor. i. 12, 13.

at finding that he makes no reply whatever; that he is speechless, and, without attempting to rebut the argument, turns aside to other subjects, on which he contents himself with repeating what he has already asserted times without number. For what purpose he announced his intention to discuss this topic, it is not easy to conjecture; unless he flattered himself with the hope of finding some good-natured readers, who would give him credit for having done what he avowed his intention of performing. Be this as it may, not a word escapes him, throughout the chapter, from which it is possible to learn whether he considers pædobaptists as a part of the church or not, the affirmation or denial of which is essentially involved in the discussion.

The only answer he attempts to the preceding reasoning is included in an assertion, the fallacy of which has already been amply exposed. "Once take away the obligation," saith he, "of conforming to the will of Christ, and the reformation is declared a mischievous insurrection, in which all parties are involved in aiding and abetting a needless and schismatical project. But if it be right to leave good men, because they have left Jesus Christ, it is right not to admit his terms till they come to them."* To which it is sufficient to reply, that to leave good men, that is, to refuse

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 55.

to join with them in those particulars in which we suppose them to have deviated from the will of Christ, is the necessary dictate of allegiance; but to refuse to walk with them, as far as we are agreed, to repel them from our communion, on account of errors and corruptions, in which we are under no necessity of participating, is a very different affair; it is an assumption of infallibility, and a deliberate invasion of the rights of conscience.

The logical force of Mr. Kinghorn's conclusion, is exactly on a footing with that of the following argument. If it be right to leave my friend when he repairs to the gaming-table, it is right not to admit him into my house, till he has relinquished the practice of gaming. If I must not go with him to the theatre, I must renounce all sort of intercourse with him, until he has abandoned theatrical amusements: a conclusion to which a stern moralist may easily be supposed to arrive, but which no correct reasoner will attempt to deduce from these premises.

That the mystical body of Christ is *one* and *one* only, and that all sincere believers are members of that body, is so clearly and unequivocally asserted in the sacred Scriptures, that it would be trifling with the reader to enter into a formal proof of a proposition, so obvious and so undeniable. The wildest heretical extravagance has never proceeded so far, as to ascribe two or more mystical

bodies to the same Head, or to deny that Christ is, in that character, really and virtually united to all the faithful. It is equally certain that the term church, whenever it is applied to denote the whole number of believers diffused over the face of the earth, is identified in scripture with the body of Christ. The church is in more passages than one affirmed to be his body. "He is the head of the body, the church. Who now rejoice," saith St. Paul, "in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, *for his body's sake, which is the church.*"*

In the language of scripture, two classes of men only are recognised, believers and unbelievers, the church and the world; nor is it possible to conceive, in consistency with the dictates of inspiration, of a third. All who are in Christ are in a state of salvation; all who belong to the world, in a state of spiritual death and condemnation. "The former are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ; the latter, the *whole world,* lieth in the wicked one." If we allow ourselves to imagine a description of persons, who, though truly sanctified in Christ and united to him as their Head, are yet no parts of his church, we adopt a Utopian theory, as unfounded and extravagant as the boldest fictions of romance. It

* Col. i. 10, 23. Eph. v. 23, 30, 32. 1 John iii. 19, 20.

is the church, and that only, if we believe the inspired writers, which "Christ so loved as to give himself for it, that he might sanctify it and cleanse it;" it is that alone, which "he will present to himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle."*

It is strange that Mr. Kinghorn should not explicitly inform us, whether pædobaptists are, or are not, to be considered as a part of this universal church. This he ought certainly to have done, or have declined entering on a branch of the controversy which, he must be aware, hinges entirely on that point. If they are admitted to be a part of his church, and he still contends for their exclusion, this is formally to plead for a schism in the body; it is to justify the forcible separation of one member from another, and to destroy the very idea of its unity. On this principle, the pathetic exhortations to perfect cooperation and concord, drawn from the beautiful analogy betwixt the mystical and natural body, insisted upon in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, are completely superseded; and one member, instead of being prohibited from saying to another, "I have no need of thee," is taught to shrink from the contact, as a contamination. Whenever we are invited to concur in practices which we esteem erroneous or corrupt, our refusal to comply is justified by

* Ephes. v. 27.

a principle the most obvious and the most urgent, the previous obligation of obeying God, rather than man; but, if we object to a transient act of communion with a member of the body of Christ, on account of those errors or corruptions in which we are not called to participate, we are guilty of dividing that body. The reason of my adverting to a *transient* act, is, that I am supposing the cause of separation to rest with us, and that a member of a different community proposes merely to unite in an occasional commemoration of the ineffable love of the Redeemer, without either a formal renunciation of the peculiarities of his sect, or an attempt to introduce them. In such circumstances, occasional fellowship is all that can be looked for; the adoption of different modes of worship, a predilection for different rites and ceremonies, will naturally dispose him to prefer a permanent union with professors of his own persuasion. While, in the mutual intercourse of such societies, a disposition to recognise each other as christians is cultivated, the unity of the body is preserved, notwithstanding their disagreement in particular points of doctrine, or of discipline. Owing to a diversity of judgement, respecting the proper organization of churches, obstacles, at present invincible, may prevent their incorporation; and it is left to the conscience of each individual to determine to which he will permanently unite himself. An enlightened christian

will not hesitate for a moment, in declining to join with that society, whatever be the piety of its individual members, in which the terms of communion involve his concurrence in religious observances, of whose lawfulness he entertains any doubt. Hence arises, in the present state of religion, an impassable barrier to the perfect intercommunity of christian societies. But it is not upon *this ground* that my opponent objects to the practice for which we are contending. He rests his refusal to commune with members of other denominations, on the principle of their not being entitled to be *recognised as christians*. He protests against a union with them, not on account of any erroneous or superstitious observances, with which the act of fellowship is necessarily combined, but because he considers them as personally disqualified. His hypothesis is indeed so wild and incoherent, that it is difficult to state it with accuracy, or to preserve a steady conception of it in the mind. According to his theory, the pædobaptists occupy a station the most anomalous and extraordinary that ever entered the human imagination. Many of them are genuine believers, of whose exalted piety he avows the fullest conviction, yet they are not to be *recognised as christians;* they are members of the mystical body of Christ, or they could derive from him no saving influence or benefit, yet are excluded from all the advantages resulting from the union and cooperation of the

several parts of which it consists; and though, as a portion of the mystical body, it is impossible to deny them a place in the *one catholic* or *universal* church, yet it is the duty of every particular church to disown and exclude them. In short, the great majority of the sincere followers of the Saviour, whose names are written in the Book of Life, are totally disqualified for performing the duties, and enjoying the privileges, which distinguish the church from the world; betwixt which they occupy some intermediate place, some *terra incognita,* whose existence it is as difficult to ascertain, as the *limbus patrum,* or a mansion in the moon. In the present state of the christian church, that extensive portion of the New Testament, which was designed to cement the affections, and to regulate the conduct of the faithful towards each other, is superseded; its precepts are in a state of suspension and abeyance, and in the midst of the Egyptian darkness which envelopes the christian world, the baptists alone dwell in the light of another Goshen. However strange these positions may appear, they form but a part of the absurdities which necessarily flow from our author's theory; nor is there any possible way of evading them, but by denying that pædobaptists belong to the mystical body of Christ, or demonstrating the consistency of their exclusion with the union and cooperation which St. Paul enjoins; or by asserting the existence of more mystical bodies than one, destined to subsist apart.

## CHAP. IX.

### *The Injustice of the Exclusion of other Denominations considered as a Punishment.*

In the treatise *On Terms of Communion* it was urged, that, as exclusion from the communion of the church is the highest ecclesiastical censure which it is possible to inflict, it can only be justified on the supposition of a proportional degree of demerit in the objects of it. If the moral turpitude inherent in the practice of infant baptism is of an order which entitles it to be compared to the habitual indulgence of vice, or the obstinate maintenance of heresy, it is but fit it should be placed on the same level, and subjected to the same treatment; but, if the understanding and the heart equally revolt at such a comparison, that method of proceeding must be allowed to be unjust. To this our author replies by denying the propriety of applying the term *exclusion* to a bare refusal of admission. "Words," he informs us, "must strangely have altered their meaning before such an application of the phrase in question can be justified." To be compelled to dispute about the

meaning of terms is always humiliating, but that his assertion is unfounded, is sufficiently evident, from the authority of the most eminent critics. Our great lexicographer, under the word exclude, defines it thus, "to shut out, to hinder from entrance, or admission;" exclusion he defines, "the act of shutting out, or denying admission." Thus much for Mr. Kinghorn's accuracy as a grammarian. Let us next examine his reasoning.

He denies that the act of debarring every other denomination from admission is a *punishment*—"it is not considered as such by sensible pædobaptists."* But why is it not? Solely because the baptist societies are too few and too insignificant to enable them to realise the effects of their system, in its full extent. Their principle involves an absolute interdict of church privileges to the members of every other community; but, being an inconsiderable minority, there are not wanting numerous and respectable societies, who stand ready to give a welcome reception to the outcasts, and to succour the exiles. That their rejection is not followed by its natural consequence, a total privation of the communion of saints, is not to be ascribed, in the smallest degree, to the liberality or forbearance of our opponents, but solely to their imbecility. The celebration of the eucharist they consider as null and void, when

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 60.

attended to by a pædobaptist; his approach to the table is absolutely prohibited within the sphere of their jurisdiction; and should their principles ever obtain a general prevalence, the commemoration of the love of a crucified Saviour would become impracticable, except to persons of their own persuasion. Instances have often occurred where the illiberal practice, against which we are contending, has been felt to be a punishment of no ordinary severity; where eminently holy men have been so situated, that the only opportunity they possessed of celebrating the passion of the Redeemer has been withheld, and they have been compelled, most reluctantly, to forego one of the most exalted privileges of the church; nor has it ever been known, that compassion for the peculiar hardship of the case was suffered to suspend the unrelenting severity of the sentence. Let me ask the advocates for the exclusive system, whether they would be moved for a moment to extend their indulgence to a solitary individual, who differed from them on the subject of baptism, although he was so circumstanced as to render a union with other classes of christians impossible?

This writer affirms, it is not *intended* as a punishment by the baptists, and strongly remonstrates against the confounding it with the sentence of excommunication, on account of immoral delinquency. He concurs with the author of *Terms of Communion* in admitting that, in these instances,

its "accordance with the moral nature of man may and does give it authority and weight; in such an instance as the incestuous person at Corinth, it becomes an instrument of punishment. He was *in* the church, and could be expelled *from* it. But which way the censure or punishment of excommunication and expulsion can take place in one who never was in a society, the strict baptists," he tells us, "have yet to learn." *

In reply to this, I shall not descend to a tedious logomachy, farther than just to remark, that this writer has, on the present occasion, fallen into a similar error respecting the meaning of words with his former. Excommunication is synonymous with exclusion, and is defined, by the highest authority, "an ecclesiastical interdict; exclusion from the fellowship of the church." † The punishment it involves is exactly proportioned to the value of the privilege it withholds; and, therefore, to affirm that it is not a punishment, is equivalent to the assertion that the fellowship of the church is not a benefit. To withhold privileges and immunities from him who is legally entitled to their possession, must be supposed to be felt with a severity proportioned to the justice of his title, and the magnitude and extent of his privations.

By refusing to admit a pædobaptist to the privilege of communion with *us*, we, in fact, affirm

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 60.

† See Johnson.

his incompetence to commune any where; we deprive him, as far as our influence extends, of all the advantages which result from the fellowship of the saints; and that he is not reduced to the situation of an outcast and an exile from the church, is in no degree to be imputed to the lenity of our decision, but to the limitation of our power. It is surely not necessary to multiply words, to prove that the equity of every judicial sentence must be ascertained, by considering it as it is *in itself*, by exploring its tendency, not by adverting to a fortuitous concurrence of circumstances, which may possibly mitigate or extinguish the evils with which it is fraught. In the present instance, we must, in order to form an accurate judgement, make the supposition, that the sentence of excommunication actually operates, in its full extent, so as to deprive the subject of it of all the consolation and benefit resulting from the union of christians; we must suppose that no asylum is left to which he can retreat, no community remaining where he can hide his humiliation and his shame. For that there is any, is solely to be ascribed to the prevalence of a system which our opponents are accustomed to stigmatize as erroneous, and for the existence of which it is not to be imagined, therefore, they will assume to themselves the smallest credit. Let us imagine, what Mr. Kinghorn will, probably, be among the first to anticipate, that the sentiments of the baptists

triumphed to such an extent, as to be embraced by dissenting churches in general, and that the opposite views were retained only by a few individuals; let us suppose one of the latter description to possess the zeal, the humility, the devotion of a Brainerd, and that, on account of his being unable to perceive the nullity of infant baptism, he were shut out from every religious society within his reach, though acknowledged to possess an elevation of character which threw the virtues of others into the shade; would there be no hardship, no injustice, in this case? Would it be sufficient to silence the murmurs of indignation to remark, that it was not *intended as a punishment*, that he had nothing to complain of; for "as he was never *in* the church, he could not be expelled *from* it?" Would such cold and trivial subtleties, were they as correct as they are erroneous, quell the instinctive cry of justice, demanding a satisfactory reason for placing the friend and the enemy of God, the devoted servant of Christ and the avowed despiser of the great salvation, on the same level, and comprehending them in one and the same sweeping censure? If these characters are totally opposed, not merely by the contrast exhibited between the vices of the world and the virtues it is most prone to admire, but in consequence of the possession, by one of the parties, of supernatural and sanctifying grace, where is the equity of confounding them together

by the interdict of religious privileges? and if the door is opened, at the same time, for the admission into the church of persons of a character decidedly inferior, how can impartial justice be asserted to hold the scale, and determine the merits of the respective candidates;—justice, whose office it is to appreciate the rival claims of competitors, and to impart to every one his due? The iniquity of such a mode of procedure is so obvious and striking, that it is no wonder we find our opponents exert their ingenuity to the utmost in attempting to palliate and disguise it, though the issue of their attempts is only to plunge them deeper in perplexity and contradiction.

The author of *Terms of Communion* had remarked, "that there was no difference with respect to the present inquiry, betwixt the refusal of a candidate, and the expulsion of a member, since nothing could justify the former of these measures, which might not be equally alleged in vindication of the latter. *Both* amount to a declaration of the parties being unworthy to communicate." To this Mr. Kinghorn replies, by observing that "in one case the party is declared unworthy from *moral delinquency;* in the other, he is not declared *unworthy*, but *unqualified.*" Here it is plainly conceded that pædobaptists are not refused on a *moral* ground; whence it necessarily follows, that even supposing they were acquitted from all blame in practising infant baptism, their exclusion would

still be justifiable. They are not repelled from the sacrament, it seems, on account of any breach of duty of which they are guilty; for to assert this, would be to contradict himself, by resting their exclusion on their *moral delinquency*. They incur the forfeiture of all the privileges of the church, for no fault whatever; and whether they be perfectly free from blame or not, in the adoption of an unauthorized rite, is a consideration totally foreign to the question, and it is not to be taken into the account, in assigning the reasons for their non-admission. Let the candid reader seriously ponder this extraordinary concession; let him ask himself, whether he is prepared to believe that, in consistence with the genius of the gospel, the most extensive forfeiture of religious immunities can be incurred without guilt, and the heaviest ecclesiastical censure inflicted on the innocent. He will doubtless reject such a supposition with unmingled disgust; he will feel no hesitation in deciding, that the error which prohibits a church from *recognising* the person to whom it is ascribed, *as a christian*, which Mr. Kinghorn expressly applies to infant baptism, must incur a high degree of culpability in the eyes of him "who judgeth righteous judgement."

The glaring inconsistency of this whole statement with the preceding assertions of the same writer, is palpable and obvious. He entirely concurs with Mr. Booth, in characterizing pædo-

baptists as persons, "who do not revere Christ's authority, submit to his ordinances, nor obey the laws of his house." But will he attempt to distinguish this charge from that of moral delinquency? Again, quoting the declaration of St. Paul, that "the kingdom of God consists in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," he adds, "now as far as the kingdom of God consists in *righteousness*, it must include obedience to practical precepts, both moral and positive.* We have an eminent instance of submission to John's baptism being called righteousness by our Lord." But if the pædobaptists are justly chargeable with want of *righteousness*, and on that account are not entitled to christian fellowship, they must certainly be excluded on the ground of *moral delinquency*. If, on the other hand, the deficiency of righteousness involved in the practice of infant baptism, is not sufficient to justify such a treatment; the reasoning in the above passage is utterly futile. By denying that they are excluded on the ground of *moral delinquency*, at the same time that he imputes to them conduct highly criminal, he has involved himself in inextricable difficulties; since, supposing it could be proved to a demonstration, that they did "not revere the authority of Christ," &c., he has deprived himself of the power of urging it in vindication of

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 46.

his system, by protesting against the supposition of his resting its operation on moral considerations. But if no guilt is implied in these charges, why are they adduced? and if there be, how is that to be distinguished from moral delinquency? He tells us they are not *unworthy*, but only *disqualified;* whence it follows that, in his opinion, he may be worthy of communion, who "does not revere the authority of Christ;" nor would it be possible to dispute his title, were he but *qualified.*

In adopting this system, he professes to obey the directions, and to imitate the conduct, of the Supreme Legislator, whom he affirms not to have received the unbaptized into the gospel dispensation. If this profession is sincere, he surely will not deny that it is his intention to proceed on the same grounds, and act from the same motive, with the great Head of the Church.

But when, by refusing to admit them into the christian dispensation, he virtually declares them *disqualified*, which is the doctrine of this writer, is it under the character of *innocent persons*, or of delinquents? Will he affirm that the benefits of that economy are withheld from any who have, by no act, deserved that privation? Is the sentence by which their disqualification is incurred, capricious and arbitrary, or is it merited? To say it is not, would be impious; and to affirm that it *is*, is to contradict himself by founding it, after

all, on moral considerations, or, which is perfectly equivalent, on "moral delinquency."

The distinction, then, which he has attempted to establish betwixt being *unworthy*, and being *disqualified*, is perfectly nugatory; and the persons to whom it is applied, though they may not be *unworthy* in other respects, must be acknowledged to be such, on account of that particular instance of disobedience for which they are disqualified. Their disobedience places them on a footing with other classes of delinquents, by shutting them out from the communion of saints. They incur the same forfeiture, and for the same general reason, want of practical compliance with the will of Christ. They are defective, to use this author's own language, in the *righteousness* of the kingdom; and, though they possess faith, they fail in exhibiting obedience.

The objections formerly urged against this system, consequently return in their full force. Since the exclusion of pædobaptists must, after every possible evasion, be founded on their supposed demerits, if these are necessarily and intrinsically equal to the moral imperfections which are tolerated in baptist societies, it is just. If, among the millions who have practised infant baptism, the most eminent saint whom past ages have produced, is to be considered as more criminal on that account than the crowd of imperfect christians whom we admit without scruple into

our churches, the charge of injustice must be relinquished. Unless this can be sustained, it remains undiminished and unimpaired.

The method by which Mr. Kinghorn attempts to parry this reasoning is a recurrence to his old sophism, which consists of confounding together things totally distinct, namely, a refusal to *partake* in objectionable rites, with the exclusion of such as embrace them from our communion. Here he takes occasion to affirm that the same objection may be made to our secession from the Romish, as from the established church.*

Did we repel men of unquestionable piety on account of their avowed attachment to the peculiarities of a sect or party, there would be a propriety in identifying our practice with that of

* "The imposition of rites," says Mr. Kinghorn, "which Christ has not commanded, and the combination of those sentiments, with the structure of the church, which we think injurious to its nature, and contrary to the will of the Lord, have rendered it necessary for us to establish *a separate communion.* Here the fact is, that we feel ourselves called upon to say, that we can have no fellowship with them, in communion at the Lord's table. On this ground it would be a very easy thing to represent the conduct of protestants, and of protestant dissenters, in the same dark colouring, as Mr. Hall has applied to the strict baptists. Let a man of talent exclaim against them for departing from the *true church;* and represent their conduct in establishing a communion of their own, as declaring in the strongest form, that they deem others unworthy of their society, and that in so doing, they pronounce the sentence of expulsion, &c. and he will do no more than Mr. Hall has done, in the whole of this part of his reasoning."—*Baptism a Term of Communion*, p. 63.

our opponents; for in that case we should both act on the same principle. But in refusing to join in a communion, accompanied by appendages which we conscientiously disapprove, we proceed on a totally *different* ground. We recede just as far as a moral necessity dictates, and no farther. Nor is it true, as this writer asserts, that this mode of proceeding implies as severe a censure on the societies from which we dissent, as the practice which we are opposing inflicts on pædobaptists. He who conceives that the posture of kneeling is an unauthorised innovation on the primitive mode of celebrating the eucharist, must necessarily dissent from the church which prescribes it: but will it be affirmed that his doing so implies a conviction that the adherents to that rite are universally disqualified for fellowship, that they are not entitled to be acknowledged christians, or that they are so deficient in the *righteousness* in which the kingdom of God consists, as to invalidate their profession, and exclude them from the christian dispensation? But these are the charges urged against the pædobaptists. Let the smallest error imaginable be so incorporated with the terms of communion, that an explicit assent to it is implied in that act; and he who discerns it to be an error, must, if he is conscientious, dissent, and establish a separate communion: but are there any prepared to assert, that this is precisely the same thing as to repel the person who embraces it, from the Lord's table?

I am weary and ashamed of being under the necessity of occupying the reader's attention with the exposure of such obvious fallacies. Suffice it to remark, once for all, that our dissent from the establishment is founded on the necessity of departing from a communion, to which certain corruptions, in our apprehension, inseparably adhere; while we welcome the pious part of that community to that celebration of the eucharist which we deem unexceptionable. We recede from *their* communion from necessity, but we feel no scruple in admitting them to *ours;* while our strict brethren reject them, as well as every other description of pædobaptists, altogether. On him who has not discernment to perceive, or candour to acknowledge, the difference betwixt these methods of proceeding, all further reasoning would be wasted.

One more evasion must be noticed before we conclude this part of the subject. The pædobaptists are represented as chargeable with nothing more than a *misconception* of the nature of a positive institute. But this, it is observed, is *not* the question before us: the present controversy relates to the *institute itself.* It is *not* whether the members of a church have fully and properly conceived the nature of the institute to which they have submitted. If this were the case, we might be represented as expelling the ignorant and the weak, instead of instructing and encouraging

them. But it is, whether an institute delivered by Christ, is to be maintained, or to be given up."*

To this I reply: The advocates of infant baptism are either sincerely of opinion that the rite in question ought to be extended to infants, or they are guilty of prevarication. If there be any of the last description to be found, they are entirely out of the question; for, supposing their character ascertained, they have never been contemplated as proper objects of toleration. With respect to the former, who sincerely believe it was the intention of our Lord to extend the right of baptism to the infant seed of believers, is it possible for them to act otherwise than they do? With what then are they chargeable, except with a misconception of a positive institute? And if we are not to repel the ignorant and the weak, we must either affirm that they are not ignorant in this particular, and thus accuse them, contrary to the supposition, of wilful prevarication, or we must tolerate them. Though we are far from insinuating that our pædobaptist brethren are, in general, either ignorant or weak, yet as ignorance and weakness are undoubtedly adequate to the production of any *misconception,* on the subject of religion not fundamental, they will consequently account for the error which has given birth to infant baptism;

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 65.

and just as far as it is capable of being ascribed to this source, its abettors are, by our author's concession, objects of forbearance. And since there is no medium, but all pædobaptists, however discerning in other respects, must either be supposed ignorant in this particular, or to prevaricate; forbearance must be extended to as many of them as are deemed sincere; beyond which we are as unwilling to extend it as he is. While they entertain their present views on the subject of baptism, they must either administer it to infants, or violate the dictates of conscience; and therefore, if they are *chargeable* with any thing more than a *misconception*, the matter of that charge must be deduced from their acting like upright men; an accusation, which we hope, for the honour of human nature, will proceed from none but strict baptists.

The sum of what has been advanced on this head is, that the privation of communion is an evil exactly proportioned to the value of that benefit; that as far as the tendency of the exclusive system is concerned, and to the utmost power of its abettors, the evil is extended to every denomination except one; that it is either inflicted on account of *moral delinquency*, or is utterly unmerited; since, if that ground be relinquished, their exclusion must be asserted to be just, even supposing them perfectly innocent; that whatever *blame* may be imputed, bears no proportion to

that which incurs the forfeiture of the same privilege in other instances; nor to the faults and imperfections which are daily tolerated without scruple; and, finally, since the practice which is treated with so much severity, is the necessary result of a *misconception* of the nature of a positive institute, which is only another name for ignorance or weakness in that particular, to make it the pretext of expulsion or excommunication, is repugnant to the maxims even of our opponents.

## CHAP. X.

*On the Contrariety of the Maxims and Sentiments of the Advocates of Strict Communion, to those which prevailed in the early Ages; in which the Innovation imputed to them by the Author, is vindicated from the Charge of Misrepresentation.*

In order to comprehend the true state of the question, as it respects the practice of christian antiquity, it may be convenient to distribute it into three periods; the first including the time during which correct sentiments on the subject of baptism universally prevailed; the second, that in which a gradual transition was made from the practice of adult to that of infant baptism; the third, the period in which the latter obtained a general and almost undisputed ascendency.

On the first of these periods little need be said. Where there are no dissimilar elements, there can be no mixture; and therefore to affirm that the practice we are contending for, was unknown in the earliest ages of the christian church, is little more than an identical proposition. While no demur or dispute subsisted respecting either the

form, or the application of the baptismal rite, a punctual compliance with it was expected and enforced by the presidents of christian societies, for precisely the same reason which suggested a similar mode of proceeding to the apostles. It was a part of the will of Christ, in the interpretation of which, no division of opinions subsisted among the faithful. The next period is that, during which an innovation was gradually introduced, by extending the ceremony in question to infants—a period which, from the commencement of the third, unto the close of the fourth, probably comprehended the space of two centuries. Supposing the modern practice to have been first introduced towards the end of the second, or the beginning of the third century, which corresponds to the time at which it is distinctly noticed by Tertullian, the first writer who explicitly mentions it, we cannot suppose a shorter space was requisite to procure it that complete establishment and ascendency, which it possessed in the time of St. Austin. During that long interval there must have been some who still adhered to the primitive practice, and others who favoured and adopted the more recent innovations; there must, in other words, have been baptists and pædobaptists cotemporary with each other. What became of that portion of the ancient church which refused to adopt the baptism of infants? Did they separate from their brethren in order to form distinct and

exclusive societies? Of this, not the faintest trace or vestige is to be found in ecclesiastical history; and the supposition is completely confuted, by the concurrent testimony of ancient writers to the universal incorporation of orthodox christians into one grand community. We challenge our opponents to produce the shadow of evidence in favour of the existence, during that long tract of time, of a single society, of which adult baptism was the distinguishing characteristic. Tertullian, it is acknowledged, is the first who distinctly and unequivocally adverts to the contrary practice: and as he expresses disapprobation of it at the same time, without the remotest intimation of the propriety of making it the ground of separation, he must be allowed to form one instance of the practice of mixed communion; and unless we are disposed to assert that the modern innovation in the rite of baptism supplanted the original ordinance at once, multitudes must have been in precisely the same situation. We well know that in the latter period of his life, he *did* secede from the orthodox catholic church; but we are equally certain, that he was moved to this measure, not by his disapprobation of infant baptism, but solely by his attachment to the Montanists.

We, therefore, offer our opponents the alternative, either of affirming that the transition from the primitive to the modern usage, was sudden and instantaneous, in opposition to all that observation

suggests respecting the operations of mind, or of acknowledging that, for two centuries, the predecessors of the present baptists unanimously approved and practised a mixed communion—a communion in which baptists and pædobaptists united in the same societies.

Thus it appears that the system we are advocating, instead of being, as Booth and Kinghorn assert, a "modern invention," was introduced as early as it was possible—as early as the dissimilar materials existed, of which the combination under discussion is formed. It is evident, that no sooner did a difference of opinion on the subject of baptism arise, than the system of forbearance recommended itself at once to all who adhered to the sentiments of the modern baptists, throughout every part of the world; and that it is the opposite principle which has to contend with all the odium and suspicion attached to recent innovations.

When we descend to the third period, we are presented with a new scene. After the commencement of the fourth century, down to the æra of the Reformation, the baptism of infants was firmly established, and prevailed to such an extent, that few traces of the ordinance, in its primitive state, are to be discerned. Many of the Waldenses, however, are judged, with great appearance of evidence, to have held opinions on that subject coincident with those by which we, as a denomi-

nation, are distinguished. By their persecutors of the Romish community they are usually stigmatized and reproached for holding the anabaptist heresy; while it appears, on the contrary, that there were not wanting some amongst them who practised the baptism of infants.* These opposite statements, exhibited with equal confidence, on this obscure branch of ecclesiastical history, are best reconciled and accounted for, by supposing them divided in their sentiments on that particular. No indication, however, is discoverable of a rupture in external communion having occurred on that account; and, from the acknowledged difficulty of ascertaining the separate existence of baptist societies during the middle ages, and until the period of the Reformation, the necessary inference is, either that there were none, during that interval, who adhered to the primitive institute, or, as is far more probable, that they were mingled and incorporated with persons of another persuasion.

Hence it is manifest that the concurrent testimonies of the fathers of the three or four first

* See *The History of the Baptists*, by Mr. Ivimey, in which this subject is discussed with much care and impartiality. To those who wish for information respecting many curious and important circumstances, connected with the progress of the baptist opinions, I would earnestly recommend the perusal of that valuable work; for which the public at large, and our own denomination in particular, are much indebted to the pious and laborious author.

centuries, in proof of the necessity of baptism, to church-fellowship, are urged to no purpose whatever, unless it could be shewn that there was no mixed communion, no association of the advocates of adult, with the patrons of pædobaptism, known in those ages; a supposition which is at direct variance with facts. Nor is it at all difficult to assign a satisfactory reason for that combination of testimonies which the writings of the fathers supply in favour of the essential connexion of the two ordinances. The scanty writings which remain of the authors of the second century, afford no decisive indication of the existence of infant baptism, in the period in which they flourished; and, during the third, the few authors whose works have descended to us, appear, with the exception of Tertullian, to have imbibed the pædobaptist persuasion. It was natural for the first class of these fathers, who lived at a time when no doubt or dispute had arisen on the subject, to insist on a compliance with that ordinance; nor was it possible for the second, who extended baptism to infants, and considered it as the indispensable means of regeneration, to pursue another course.

That there was a mixture of persons, of different persuasions, in christian societies, during the period to which we have adverted, appears to be an unquestionable fact; but in what manner those who adhered to the primitive institution reasoned on the subject, as they have left no

writings behind them, or none which touch on this subject, must be left to conjecture. Whether they defended their conduct on precisely the same principles with ourselves, or whether they considered pædobaptism as not so properly nullifying, as corrupting or enfeebling, a christian ordinance, it is to little purpose to inquire. It is sufficient for us to know, that the practice which is stigmatized as *modern,* existed as early as a difference of opinion on the subject arose.

In my former treatise I had remarked, "that the decision of christian writers, that baptism, in some form or other, must necessarily precede the celebration of the eucharist, supposing it ever so unanimous, affords but a feeble proof, since it assumes for its basis the impossibility of the universal prevalence of error." The truth of this assertion is almost self-evident; for if it be possible for error to prevail universally, what should prevent the possibility of its doing so in this particular instance? "No," says our author, "it assumes a very different principle; that the human mind in all its wanderings never took this direction before."* But what is the difference betwixt affirming that the opinion which separates the title to communion, from baptism, was unknown until it was adopted by the advocates of mixed communion, and asserting "that the human mind

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 145.

never took this direction before?" Are they any thing more than two different modes of expressing the same proposition? To say, then, that the argument in question assumes for its basis "that the human mind never took this direction before," is to say that it assumes to itself a method of reasoning most repugnant to the rules of logic, however familiar with this writer.

He feels very indignant at my affirming that the right of excluding persons of unquestionable worth and piety was never claimed by antiquity. In opposition to this, he adduces the example of Cyprian, who insisted on the rebaptization of heretics and schismatics, previous to their reception into the body of the faithful. If it be considered, however, in what light heretics and schismatics were contemplated by that celebrated father, the objection vanishes; since no doubt can be entertained, that their preceding profession of christianity was considered by him as a mere nullity, their faith fundamentally erroneous, the privileges they supposed themselves to possess, a vain illusion, and the entire system of their religion, an abomination in the sight of God. We find him every where exerting his utmost powers of language, which were by no means inconsiderable, in stigmatizing their character, and degrading their pretensions. Having little taste for quotation, the following passages may suffice to convince the reader, under what opprobrious colours he was

accustomed to represent that description of professors. It is proper just to premise, that, on their manifesting a disposition to return to the catholic church, while Cyprian contended for the necessity of their being rebaptized before they were admitted, his opponent Stephen insisted on the sufficiency of recantation, accompanied with the imposition of hands,* without reiterating a rite, which he concluded could not be repeated without profanation. The latter opinion, in spite of the high authority of the African father, being confirmed by the council of Nice, became the received doctrine of the church, and the opposite tenet was finally denounced as heresy. But to return to Cyprian:—"We," said he, "affirm," referring to the Novatians, who were esteemed schismatics, "that those who come to us are not rebaptized, but baptized. For neither do they receive any thing, where there is nothing; but they come to us, that they may receive here, where all grace and truth is."† After stigmatizing the baptism of schismatics, as "a filthy and profane dipping," he complains, that certain of his colleagues "did not consider that it was written, he who is baptized by the dead, what profit does he derive from his washing? But it is manifest, that they who are not in the church are numbered amongst the dead,

* Cypriani Epistolæ, p. 210. Oxonii, anno 1682.

† Ibid. p. 194.

and cannot possibly be quickened by him who is not alive; since there is one only church, which having obtained the grace of eternal life, both lives for ever, and quickens the people of God."*

Speaking of heretics, he makes a distinction betwixt such as, having been members of the catholic church, fell into heresy for a time, but were afterwards recovered, and such as sprang originally from them. With respect to the latter, he says, "If he who comes from the heretics has not been before baptized in the church, but comes entirely alien and profane, he is to be baptized, that he may become a sheep, because the only holy water which can make sheep is in the church." In another epistle, we find him reasoning in the following manner:—"The very interrogation," he says, "which takes place in baptism, bears witness to the truth. Dost thou believe in eternal life, and the remission of sins by the holy church? We mean by it, that the remission of sins is given only in the church; but, amongst heretics, where the church is not, sins cannot be remitted. Let them therefore who plead for heretics, (that is, for their admission into the church without rebaptizing,) either alter the interrogation, or vindicate the truth; unless they are disposed to give the appellation of the church to those whom they assert to possess true baptism."†

* Cypriani Epistolæ, p. 194. † Ibid.

His epistles are full of similar sentiments. What resemblance, let me ask, are they perceived to bear to the principles on which strict communion is founded; or who will be so absurd as to affirm that the example of Cyprian, in rejecting the communion of persons whom he esteemed spiritually dead, and incapacitated for receiving the remission of sins, affords the least countenance for treating in a similar manner, such as are acknowledged to possess the most eminent and exalted piety? "True," Mr. Kinghorn replies, "but when they requested admission into the catholic orthodox church, they had ceased to be heretics or schismatics, since they left the societies where heresy was professed, acknowledged their former error, and requested to be numbered with the orthodox. Notwithstanding this, however, Cyprian insisted on their being rebaptized."* But why did he insist upon it? He tells us himself, it was because "they had received nothing, they were baptized by the dead;" they wanted "that holy water peculiar to the church, which alone can vivify;" and their pretended baptism, or, to use his own words, "their profane dipping," was necessarily unaccompanied with the remission of sins. In short, however well they might be disposed, and prepared, on the application of due means, for the reception of the highest benefits, they were, as

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 152.

yet, in his estimation, in a state of unregeneracy. Hence the reader may judge of the pertinence and correctness of the subsequent remark:—"Their interest in the blessings of the christian covenant," says Mr. Kinghorn, "was not doubted, yet their right to the Lord's supper was doubted, because the validity of their baptism was questioned."* "*Their interest in the blessings of the covenant was not doubted,*" although Cyprian declares his conviction, that they had received nothing, that their baptism was a nullity, that they wanted the only water which could quicken, and that, instead of it, they had received only a "sordid and profane dipping, which could not possibly be accompanied with the remission of sins."

The reader will be at no loss to determine which of us is justly chargeable with "taking the present state of opinion, and of applying it to former ages;" when he perceives that my opponent is so possessed with these ideas, as to be utterly incapable of contemplating the sentiments of Cyprian through the right medium. He entirely forgets the importance he attached to baptism as a regenerating ordinance; and his denial, that the persons of whom he was treating had received it; which, combined together, must necessarily have placed them, in his estimation, at the utmost remove from the situation in which pious pædobaptists are at present considered.

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 154.

His opponent, Stephen, contended for the propriety of receiving them without a repetition of that rite, because he already conceived it had been truly and solidly performed: this Cyprian denied, and the only question in debate respected the validity of a ceremony which both equally esteemed to be the necessary means of regeneration. Upon the principles common to both, the African father reasoned with most consistency: for how could heretics and schismatics, who were acknowledged to be spiritually dead, communicate life by the performance of a ceremony? and how totally incongruous to suppose every part of their religious service devoid of vitality and force, except their baptism, by which, as Cyprian continually urges, they were supposed to confer that renovating spirit which, in every other instance, they were denied to possess. . .

But, whatever judgement may be formed of the merits of this controversy, nothing can be more impertinent to the question at issue betwixt my opponent and myself, which is simply, whether the refusal to admit persons of unquestioned piety into the church, was the doctrine of the ancient fathers. In proof of this, he alleges the example of Cyprian, who contended for the necessity of rebaptizing such as had been already reclaimed from heresy and schism. Now, if Cyprian's ideas on the subject of baptism had been the same, or in any degree similar to those which are at present entertained, the objec-

tion would have been forcible; but when we learn from his own mouth, that his demand was founded on their not having been "quickened," on their wanting "the water of life," on their not having approached the fountain of renovation and pardon, in a word, on their still remaining unregenerate; what can be conceived more futile, than to adduce his authority for refusing a class of persons to whom, it is acknowledged, none of these objections apply? Let us first insist on the admission of those whom we believe to be destitute of regeneration and pardon, and we must dispose of the authority of Cyprian as we can; but, till that is the case, however we differ from him in its application, we act on one and the same principle.

Mr. Kinghorn is very anxious to prevent his readers from being led to suppose, from certain passages I had quoted, that Cyprian was a friend to mixed communion. If he means by this that he was not disposed to admit into the church such as were, on all hands, acknowledged to be unbaptized, his opinion is, undoubtedly, correct; nothing was more remote from my intention than to insinuate the contrary. But if it is his intention to affirm that Cyprian was averse to the mixture of baptists and pædobaptists at the Lord's table, he must be supposed to assert that there were none in his communion who adhered to what we conceive the primitive institute; and, considering the extensive influence which he derived from his

station as metropolitan of Africa, and the celebrity of his character, this is equivalent to an admission that it had totally disappeared from that province as early as the middle of the third century; a dangerous concession, as well as a most improbable supposition. It is to suppose that a corruption (as we must necessarily deem it) of a christian ordinance, the explicit mention of which first occurs but fifty years before, had already spread with such rapidity through Africa, as to efface every trace and relic of the primitive practice. It is unnecessary to observe the important advantage which such a concession would yield in the controversy with pædobaptists. The truth is, that unless we are disposed to admit that the baptism of infants had already totally supplanted the original ordinance throughout the catholic church, Cyprian must be allowed to have patronised mixed communion in precisely the same sense in which it is countenanced at present by our pædobaptist brethren.

This may suffice to rescue me from the charge of misrepresenting the sentiments of Cyprian; an accusation which excited so much surprise, that I determined to reperuse the epistles of that celebrated writer; but after carefully reading every line, I must solemnly declare that I feel at a loss to discover a shadow of ground for this imputation.

It is not, however, the sentiments of Cyprian only that I am charged with misrepresenting; the

donatists, it is affirmed, proceeded on the same views, when they insisted on the necessity of rebaptizing the members of the catholic church. "They acted," he says, "exactly on the same principle which Mr. Hall reprobates." That principle, it is unnecessary to repeat, is the propriety, not of baptizing such as have been induced, through misconception, to neglect the valid performance of that rite, which is our uniform practice, but the exclusion of those, against whom nothing is alleged, besides the invalidity of their baptism. But nothing can be more remote from the ground on which the donatists proceeded. They conceived the whole christian world contaminated by their communion with the African traditors;* that they had fallen into a state of deep and deadly corruption, and, so far were they from founding the separation on the insufficiency of their baptism, that they inferred its invalidity solely from the mortal contagion they were deemed to have contracted, and from the abominations they were supposed to tolerate.† They considered the church of Christ, as far as the catholic societies were concerned, as extinct; and, on that account, were

* Those who delivered up the sacred writings.

† "Dicit enim Parmenianus, hinc probari consceleratum fuisse orbem terrarum criminibus traditionis, et aliorum sacrilegiorum: quia cum multa alia fuerint tempore persecutionis admissa, nulla propterea facta est in ipsis provinciis separatio populorum."—*Contra Epistolam Parmeniani, Augustini*, lib. i.

vehemently urged by St. Austin to reconcile their hypothesis with the promise made to Abraham, "that in his seed all nations of the earth should be blessed." But will any pædobaptist be found so absurd as to press the advocates of strict communion with a similar argument? And will it, after this, be contended, that the conduct of the donatists, in refusing to admit the baptism of men whom they viewed as plunged in a state of hopeless degeneracy, bears any resemblance to the conduct of those who repel such as they affect to regard as the most excellent of the earth?

This writer is highly offended with my presuming to express a conviction that the advocates of strict communion have violated more maxims of antiquity than any other sect upon record. The extent to which they have carried their deviation in one particular is already sufficiently obvious. Mr. Kinghorn was challenged to produce an instance of an ancient father, who contended for the right of repelling a genuine christian from the eucharist. He adduced the example of Cyprian, and of the donatists; and by this time we presume the intelligent reader is at no loss to perceive how completely these instances have failed.

A writer of his undisputed learning would, doubtless, select the strongest case; we may, therefore, until he fortifies his positions better, venture, without hesitation, to enumerate, among other deviations, the pretended right of excluding such

as are acknowledged to be genuine christians. In ancient times, the limits of communion were supposed to be coextensive with those of visible christianity, and none were excluded from the catholic church but those whom that church deemed heretics or schismatics. Our opponents proceed on an opposite principle; they exclude myriads whom they would not dare to stigmatize with either appellation. In ancient times, the necessity of baptism, as a qualification for communion, was avowedly and uniformly founded on its supposed essential connexion with salvation; our opponents have totally relinquished that ground, yet still assert, with equal vehemence, the same necessity, and absurdly urge the shadow, or rather the skeleton, of ancient precedent, after they had disembowelled it, and divested it of its very soul and spirit. In ancient times, the whole mass of human population was distributed into two classes, the church and the world; all who were deemed incapable of admission to the first, were considered as belonging to the last of these.

The advocates of strict communion have invented a new classification, a division of mankind into the world, the church, by which they mean themselves, and an immense body of pious pædobaptists, who are comprised in neither of the preceding classes, their charity forbidding them to place them with the former, and their peculiar principles with the latter. Were they to assign

them to the world, they would at once declare them out of the pale of salvation; were they to acknowledge them a part of the church, they would convict themselves of the crime of schism, in repelling them from communion. In attempting to designate this class of christians, compared to which *their* numbers dwindle into impalpable insignificance, they are reduced to the utmost perplexity. On the one hand, they contend, that they are not entitled to be considered as disciples; on the other, they loudly proclaim the confidence they entertain of their ready admission into heaven. They are acknowledged to possess faith in an eminent degree, yet it is denied that they have afforded any legitimate evidence of it; and though *out of the church*, it is confessed, it would be the height of bigotry to pretend to invalidate their religious pretensions, yet to recognise their validity *in it*, would be an equal impropriety. It is unnecessary to say how far these maxims deviate from christian antiquity; nor is it easy to conceive the astonishment their avowal would have excited in the breast of the Cyprians and the Austins; I might add, of the apostles and evangelists of a former age. Guided by the simple dictates of inspiration, accustomed to contemplate the world under two divisions only, that of believers and of unbelievers, they would, doubtless, have felt themselves at an utter loss to comprehend the possibility of the existence of an equivocal race, who are to be

treated as heathens *in* the church, and as christians *out* of it; and, while they possess whatever is necessary for an instant translation to glory, are disqualified for the possession of the most ordinary privileges of the christian church.

As it is the province of poetry to give to "airy nothings a local habitation and a name," if we cannot eulogize the reasoning of our opponents, we willingly allow them all the praise of a creative fancy, due to the invention of so bold a fiction.

The unity of the church is not merely a tenet of antiquity, but a doctrine of scripture, to which great importance is attached by the inspired writers. Wherever the word occurs, without being applied to a particular society, the idea of *unity* is strictly preserved by the invariable use of the singular number; the great community denoted by it is styled the *body of Christ*, of which every believer is declared to be a particular member;* and the perfect *oneness* of the whole is solemnly and repeatedly attested. "The bread which we break," says St. Paul, "is it not the communion of the body of Christ? for we, being many, are *one* bread and *one* body, for we are all partakers of that one bread."† "Now ye," says he, in the same epistle, "are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

This grand and elevating conception of the unity which characterises the christian church,

* Ephes. v. 23. Col. i. 24. † 1 Cor. x. 16, 17.

was ever present to the minds of the fathers; and never do they rise to a higher strain of manly and impressive eloquence, than when they are expatiating on this theme. Thus we find Irenæus celebrating that "church which was disseminated throughout the whole world, to the very ends of the earth, which carefully preserved the preaching and the faith she had once received, as though she resided in one house; and proclaimed, and taught, and delivered the same doctrine, as though she possessed but one soul, one heart, and one mouth."* "Every kind," says Tertullian, "must be referred to its origin. So many and so great churches as now subsist, are that one church, founded by the apostles, from which they all derive. Thus all are first, and apostolical, while they retain the relation of peace, the appellation of fraternity, and the symbol of hospitality; which rights are regulated by no other principle than the tradition of the same creed."† Cyprian, comparing the church to the sun, affirms, that while she extends her rays through the whole world, it is yet one light, which is every where diffused; nor is the unity of the body separated; her exuberant fertility stretches her branches to the whole earth; she expands her streams most widely, yet the head and origin is one, and it is one mother

* Irenæus, lib. i. c. 2, 3.

† Tertullian De Præscriptione Hereticorum, p. 209.—Lutetiæ Parisiorum, 1675.

that is so prolific. "Who," says he, "is so wicked and perfidious, who so maddened by the fury of discord, as to suppose it possible to divide, or attempt to divide, the unity of God, the vestment of Christ, the church of God?" He elsewhere expresses his conviction that he who does not hold the unity of the church, does not hold the faith.*

During the first centuries, the unity of the church was not a splendid visionary theory; it was practically exemplified in the habits of reciprocal communion, cultivated and maintained among orthodox societies through every part of the globe.†

So repugnant, however, is the narrow exclusive system which we are opposing, to that considered as characteristic of the church, that its advocates profess themselves at a loss to comprehend its meaning, except in the arrogant and offensive sense in which it is sometimes employed to vindicate the pretensions of Roman catholics and high churchmen. "Is the unity of the church," Mr. Kinghorn asks, "destroyed by nothing but

* De Unit. Ecc. pp. 110, 111.

† See upon this branch of the subject, the admirable work of Dr. Mason, who, by a copious induction of ancient authorities, has indisputably established the fact, that every portion of the orthodox church formed one communion; and most ably illustrated the mode of proceeding by which their union was maintained. The depth and accuracy with which he has discussed the subject, must be my apology for not entering into it more fully.

strict communion?"* And, suppose it be, what then? Will it follow that strict communion does *not* destroy it? Whether it has this effect or not, is the only inquiry; not whether something else may produce the same effect in an equal degree. He adds, "is there any sense in which the church of God is, or can be considered as one, in this imperfect state, except in that which will include all those good men, who, from conscientious differences, cannot unite together on earth?" For the conduct of those good men who refuse to unite with us, unless we consent to the performance of rites which, in our estimation, are unscriptural and superstitious, they alone are responsible; but, where nothing of this nature is proposed, as is the case in the present instance, to deem them *personally* disqualified for communion, and on that ground to refuse it, is totally repugnant to every conception of unity.

In the above passage, the author breaks his mysterious silence, and, for the first time, acknowledges that all good men are component parts of the church of God, and are, consequently, members of Christ's mystical body. But he who concedes this, unless he suppose the Scriptures repealed, must confess his obligation to regulate his treatment of those members by the rules and maxims the New Testament enjoins, which prohibit the least degree of alienation, and assert the

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 101.

equal claim to regard which each individual, as a part of the body, possesses; insomuch that no language, except that which the Holy Ghost has employed, is sufficient adequately to represent that oneness of spirit, that perfect cooperation, that conjunction, or identity rather, of interests and affections, which ought to penetrate and pervade the whole. All other unions of a moral nature are, in reality, lax, feeble, and evanescent, compared with that which joins the members of Christ to each other, and to their Head. But will it be asserted that the practice of strict communion corresponds with these ideas? or that the treatment of the persons whom it excludes is a practical exemplification of the conduct which the christians at Corinth were commanded reciprocally to maintain? It will not be pretended; and since these passages, which imperatively enjoin such a behaviour on the members of Christ, and expressly and repeatedly assure us that his body is the church, are still in force, the above concession must either be retracted, or a practice, so directly subversive of it, be relinquished. If a society, of whatever description it may be, has by mutual consent selected a ceremony as the symbol of its union, those individuals, who, for the express purpose of marking their separation, refuse to perform the ceremony, have most unequivocally renounced that society; and, by parity of reason, since the joint celebration of the Lord's

supper is established in the church as the discriminating token by which its members are to recognise each other, to refuse to join in it, is equivalent to an express declaration, that the persons from whom we withdraw as *personally* disqualified, are not considered as parts of the church. It is acknowledged, however, in the foregoing passage, that all good men belong to it. But if so, they are also members of the body of Christ, and consequently entitled to exactly the same treatment as was enjoined on the Corinthians towards each other. But supposing, in consequence of minor differences of opinion, the latter had proceeded to an open rupture of communion, and refused to unite in the celebration of the eucharist; will it be asserted, that the pathetic and solemn injunctions of their inspired teacher would not have been violated by such a measure? The answer to this question is obvious, and its application to the point under discussion irresistible. The advocates of the exclusive system, on whatever side they turn, are surrounded and pressed with difficulties, from which it is utterly impossible for them to escape. To affirm that pædobaptism is of so malignant a tendency as to sever its patrons from the mystical body of Christ, is at once to impugn the hopes of salvation; since the supposition of a vital efficacy, imparted from Christ as the Head, which fails to constitute the subject of it a member, is equally unintelligible

and unscriptural. The language adopted on this subject is confessedly figurative; but not on that account obscure. Its foundation is evidently laid in that derivation of spiritual life to the souls of the faithful, for which they are indebted to their union with the Saviour; for which reason, it would be the height of absurdity to refuse the application of the figure on an occasion which comprehends its whole import and meaning. We may therefore with confidence affirm, that all genuine believers are alike members of Christ's body. But if this be admitted, they are as much entitled to the benefit, not merely of admission into the church, but of all those benevolent sympathies and attentions prescribed in the preceding passages, as though they had been mentioned by name; since the only ground on which they are enforced, is the relation the objects of them are supposed to sustain to that body.

Thus we perceive, in the principles and practice of our opponents, another glaring instance of gross violation, as well of the dictates of inspiration, as of the maxims of christian antiquity; both which concur in inculcating the doctrine of the absolute unity of the church, of its constituting Christ's mystical body, and of the horrible incongruity, I might almost say impiety, of attempting to establish a system, which represents a great majority of its members as *personally* disqualified for communion.

Once more; what foundation will they find, in ancient precedents, for the peculiar distinction allotted to one particular ceremony above every other, in consequence of which they allow the cultivation of the most intimate religious intercourse, of the most perfect intercommunity, in every branch of worship, with members of other denominations, providing they do not so far forget themselves as to lose sight of their disputes at the Lord's table? The Holy Ghost informs us, that the end of Christ's death was "to gather into one the children of God who were scattered abroad." It seems strange, that one of the principal purposes of its celebration should be to scatter abroad those children of God, who are gathered together every where else. Be this as it may, we challenge these zealous champions of precedent to produce the faintest vestige of such a practice in the ages of antiquity; or to direct us to a single nation, or sect, or individual, for an example of that capricious and arbitrary distinction attached to the eucharist, by which it is refused to an immense multitude, who are considered as entitled to every other mark of christian fraternity.

These observations, we trust, will be amply sufficient to justify the assertion, that our opponents have violated, with respect to ecclesiastical economy, more maxims of antiquity than any other sect upon record; nor will the intelligent reader be at a loss to perceive, that the weight of this censure

is little, if at all, diminished, by their conformity in one particular, by their insisting upon baptism as a term of communion; when it is recollected that the principles on which they found it, have no relation whatever to those on which it was maintained by the ancient fathers.

For the length to which this part of the discussion is extended, a natural and laudable anxiety to repel the charge of misrepresentation, will probably be deemed a sufficient apology.

## CHAP. XI.

### *Conclusion.*

BEFORE I put a final period to my part in this controversy, the attention of the reader is requested to a few miscellaneous remarks, which naturally arise out of the contemplation of the whole subject.

It is just matter of surprise, that the topic in debate should be regarded by any serious and intelligent christian, as of small importance. Such a conclusion can only be ascribed to extreme inattention, or to the force of an inveterate, though perhaps latent, prejudice, producing an unmerited predilection in favour of certain systems of ecclesiastical polity, which are incapable of sustaining the ordeal of inquiry. That those should shrink from the investigation of such topics, who, by receiving their religion from the hands of their superiors, in a mass, have already relinquished the liberty of thinking for themselves, is no more than might well be expected. But to minds free and unfettered, accustomed to spurn at the shackles of authority; and, above all, to protestant dissenters, whose peculiar boast is the privilege of

following, in the organization of their churches, no other guide but the Scriptures, that such subjects should appear of little moment, is truly astonishing. The inquiry first in importance undoubtedly is, What is christianity? What, supposing the truth of scripture, is to be believed, and to be done, with a view to eternal life? Happily for the christian world, there probably never was a time, when, in the solution of this question, so much unanimity was witnessed among the professors of serious piety, as at the present. Systems of religion, fundamentally erroneous, are falling fast into decay; while the subordinate points of difference, which do not affect the primary verities of christianity, nor the ground of hope, are either consigned to oblivion, or are the subjects of temperate and amicable controversy; and in consequence of their subsiding to their proper level, the former appear in their just and natural magnitude.

Hence, in the present state of the church, externally considered, the evil most to be deplored is, the unnatural distance at which christians stand from each other; the spirit of sects, the disposition to found their union on the "wood, hay, and stubble" of human inventions, or of disputable tenets, instead of building on the eternal rock, the "faith once delivered to the saints." They all profess to look forward to a period when these divisions will cease, and there will be "one

fold under one Shepherd." But, while every denomination flatters itself with the persuasion of that fold being its own, the principal use to which the annunciations of prophecy are directed, is to supply a motive for redoubled exertions in the defence and extension of their respective peculiarities; and instead of hailing the dawn of a brighter day, as an event in which all are equally interested, it is too often considered, there is reason to fear, as destined to complete the triumph of a party.

If we consult the Scriptures, we shall be at no loss to perceive, that the unity of the church is not merely a doctrine most clearly revealed, but that its practical exemplification is one of the principal designs of the christian dispensation. We are expressly told, that our Saviour purposed by his death to "gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad;" and for the accomplishment of this design, he interceded, during his last moments, in language which instructs us to consider it as the grand means of the conversion of the world. His prophetic anticipations were not disappointed; for while a visible unanimity prevailed amongst his followers, his cause every where triumphed: the concentrated zeal, the ardent cooperation of a comparative few, impelled by one spirit, and directed to one object, were more than a match for hostile myriads. No sooner was the bond of unity broken, by the prevalence of intestine quarrels and dissensions, than

the interests of truth languished; until mahometanism in the east, and popery in the west, completed the work of deterioration, which the loss of primitive simplicity and love, combined with the spirit of intolerance, first commenced.

If the religion of Christ ever resumes her ancient lustre, and we are assured by the highest authority she will, it must be by retracing our steps, by reverting to the original principles on which, considered as a social institution, the church was founded. We must go back to the simplicity of the first ages—we must learn to quit a subtle and disputatious theology, for a religion of love, emanating from a few divinely energetic principles, which pervade almost every page of inspiration, and demand nothing for their cordial reception and belief, besides a humble and contrite heart. Reserving to ourselves the utmost freedom of thought, in the interpretation of the sacred oracles, and pushing our inquiries, as far as our opportunities admit, into every department of revealed truth, we shall not dream of obtruding precarious conclusions on others, as articles of faith; but shall receive with open arms all who appear to "love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," and find a sufficient bond of union—a sufficient scope for all our sympathies, in the doctrine of the cross. If the Saviour appears to be loved, obeyed, and adored—if his blood is sprinkled on the conscience, and his spirit resides in the heart, why should we be

dissatisfied? *we*, who profess to be actuated by no other motive, to live to no other purpose, than the promotion of his interest.

If the kingdom of Christ, like the kingdoms of this world, admitted of local and discordant interests, and the possession of exclusive privileges—if it were a system of compromise between the selfish passions of individuals, and the promotion of the general good, the policy of conferring on one class of its subjects certain advantages and immunities withheld from another, might be easily comprehended. But in this, as well as many other features, it essentially differs. Founded on the basis of a divine equality, its privileges are as free as air; and there is not a single blessing which it proposes to bestow, but is held by the same tenure, and is capable of being possessed to the same extent, by every believer. The freedom which it confers is of so high a character, and the dignity to which it elevates its subjects, as the sons of God, so transcendent, that whether they are "Barbarians or Scythians, bond or free, male or female, they are from henceforth one in Christ Jesus." In asserting the equal right which the Gentiles possessed, in common with the Jews, to all the privileges attached to the christian profession, Peter founds his argument on this very principle. "And God, which knoweth the heart, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as unto us, and *put no difference between us*

*and them,* purifying their hearts by faith." In his apprehension, it was God, the Searcher of hearts, who, by the collation of his Spirit, in his marvellous and sanctifying gifts, having made no distinction betwixt the Gentiles and themselves, decided the controversy. If that great apostle reasoned correctly on the subject, we have only to change the term Gentiles for pædobaptists, or for any other denomination of sincere christians, and the inference remains in its full force.

Among the other attempts to deter us from pursuing a system established by such high authority, it is extraordinary that we should be reminded of the fearful responsibility we incur. To this topic Mr. Kinghorn has devoted a whole chapter. When it is recollected that we plead for the reception of none whom Christ has not received, of none whose hearts are not purified by faith, and who are not possessed of the same spirit, the communication of which was considered by St. Peter as a decisive proof that *no difference was put between them and others* by God himself, it is easy to determine where the danger lies. Were we to suffer ourselves to lose sight of these principles, and by discountenancing and repelling those whom he accepts, to dispute the validity of his seal, and subject to our miserable scrutiny, pretensions which have passed the ordeal, and received the sanction, of him, "who understandeth the heart," we should have just reason to tremble

for the consequences; and, with all our esteem for the piety of many of our opponents, we conceive it no injury or insult, to put up the prayer of our Lord for them—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

He who alters the terms of communion, changes the fundamental laws of Christ's kingdom. He assumes a legislative power, and ought, in order to justify that conduct, to exhibit his credentials, with a force and splendour of evidence, equal at least to those which attested the divine legation of Moses and the prophets.

It has been frequently observed on this occasion, that every voluntary society possesses the power of determining on the qualifications of its members; and that, for the same reason, every church is authorized to enact such terms of admission as it shall see fit. This conclusion, however, is illogical and unfounded. There is little or no analogy betwixt the two cases. Human societies originate solely in the private views and inclinations of those who compose them; and as they are not founded on divine institution, so neither are they restricted with respect to the objects they are destined to pursue. The church is a society instituted by Heaven; it is the visible seat of that "kingdom which God has set up;" the laws by which it is governed are of his prescribing, and the purposes which it is designed to accomplish, are limited and ascertained by infinite wisdom. When, therefore,

from its analogy to other societies, it is inferred that it has an equal right to organise itself at its pleasure, nothing can be more fallacious; unless it be meant merely to assert its exemption from the operation of physical force, which is a view of the subject with which we are not at present concerned. In every step of its proceedings, it is amenable to a higher than human tribunal; and on account of its freedom from external control, its obligation, *in foro conscientiæ*, exactly to conform to the mandates of revelation, is the more sacred and the more indispensable; being loosened from every earthly tie, on purpose that it may be at liberty to "follow the Lord whithersoever he goeth."

That these maxims, plain and obvious as they must appear, have been too often totally lost sight of, he who has the slightest acquaintance with ecclesiastical history must be aware; and to their complete abandonment we are indebted for the introduction of strict communion.

"The baptists," Mr. Kinghorn informs us, "consider themselves as holding to notice *one* neglected truth."* Whether they have adopted the mode of proceeding most likely to accomplish their object, may be justly doubted. Independently, however, of any such consideration, it is the *principle*, thus distinctly avowed, to which we object—

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 69.

the *principle* of organizing a church with a specific view to the propagation of some particular truth; which is a perversion of the original end and design of christian societies. Nothing, it is certain, was more remote from the views of their first founders, who aimed at nothing less than to render them the general depositaries of the "faith once delivered to the saints;" and for this purpose carefully inculcated the whole "truth as it is in Jesus," along with the duty of preserving it incorrupt and entire; without the most distant intimation that it was their province to watch over one department with more vigilance than another: least of all was it their design to recommend, as the object of preference, an external ceremony, the nature of which was destined to become a subject of debate among christians.

Let each denomination pursue this plan—let each fix upon the promotion of some one truth, as the specific object of its exertions, and the effect will soon appear, not only in extending the spirit of disunion, but in the injury which the interests of truth itself will sustain. Every denomination will exhibit some portion of it, in a distorted and mutilated form; none will be in possession of the whole, and the result will be something like the confusion of Babel, where every man spoke in a separate dialect. As the beauty of truth consists chiefly in the harmony and proportion of its several parts, it is as impossible

to display it to advantage in fragments, as to give a just idea of a noble and majestic structure, by exhibiting a single brick.

What is the consequence which must be expected from teaching an illiterate assembly, that the principal design of their union is to extend the practice of a particular ceremony, but to invest it with an undue importance in their eyes, and by tempting them to look upon themselves as christians of a higher order, to foster an overweening self-conceit, to generate selfish passions, and encourage ambitious projects? Accustomed to give themselves a decided preference above others, to treat with practical contempt the religious pretensions of the best and wisest of men, and to live in an element of separation and exclusion, it would be astonishing, indeed, if their humility were not impaired, and the more delicate sympathies of christian affection almost extinguished. In the situation in which they have placed themselves, they are reduced to a necessity of performing continually those operations which other denominations reserve for the last extremity; they are familiarised to the infliction of the most formidable sentence that the church is empowered to pass, and to that excision of the members of Christ from the body, to which others proceed with fear and trembling.

It is freely admitted that there are seasons when it is the duty of a christian society to bend its

particular attention to the exhibition and defence of a neglected branch of truth, in order to supply an antidote to the errors by which it may be attempted to be corrupted. There is no fundamental doctrine which we may not be called upon, in an especial manner, to maintain and fortify in its turn. But to make this the specific object of the constitution of a church, is totally different; it is to contract its views, and limit its efforts, in a manner utterly inconsistent with the design of its institution, which is to exhibit both the theory and practice of christianity, in all its plenitude and extent.

An exception, however, must be made, where the truth, which is said to be neglected, is fundamental. The assertion and vindication of such a truth is equivalent to the maintenance of christianity itself, which, in common with every other system, is incapable of surviving the destruction of its vital parts. Hence the reformers were justified in laying the doctrine of justification by faith as the basis of the reformed religion, because the formal denial of that truth is incompatible with the existence of a church. But, where religious communities have been founded on refined speculations, or on some particular mode of explaining and interpreting disputable tenets, the most mischievous consequences have resulted. The people usually denominated Quakers, set out with the professed design of exhibiting the doctrine of

the Spirit, which they chose to consider as a *neglected* truth, and the consequence has been such a distortion of that momentous doctrine as has, probably, contributed not a little to subject it to contempt. The Sandemanians profess to constitute their societies with an express view to the revival of certain *neglected* truths; and the effect, as far as their efforts have succeeded, has been the extinction of vital piety. The high calvinists, or, to speak more properly, the antinomians, are loud and clamorous in professing their solicitude to revive a certain class of *neglected* truths, and the result of their labour has been to corrupt the few truths they possess, and to consign others, of equal importance, to contempt and oblivion. In each of these instances, by detaching particular portions from the system to which it belongs, the continuity of truth has been broken, and the vital communication between its respective parts, on which its life and vigour depend, interrupted.

It was reserved for our opponents to pursue the same system, under a new form, by selecting the ceremony of baptism as their distinguishing symbol, and to degrade the christian profession, in our apprehension, by placing it in the due administration of the element of water.

Where, it is natural to ask, (though it is an inferior consideration,) where is the *policy* of such a proceeding? What tendency has it to recommend and to propagate the rite, about which

such zeal is exerted, and such solicitude expressed? Will the insisting on it as a term of communion, give it any additional evidence, or invest it with supernumerary charms? Will it be better relished and received, for its approaching in the form of an exaction, than if it was entrusted to the force of argument and persuasion? Were it permitted to have recourse to intimidation in the concerns of religion, where are our means and resources? where shall we look for that splendour of reputation, that command of emolument and power, which shall render a state of separation from baptist societies, an intolerable grievance? Let us learn to think soberly of ourselves, and not endeavour to enforce the justest principles by means foreign to their nature, nor, by substituting an impotent menace instead of argument, subject them to reprobation and ridicule.

Mr. Kinghorn gives it as his decided opinion, that, for a pædobaptist statedly to attend the ministry of a baptist, is a dereliction of principle. A great gulf ought, in his apprehension, to be fixed between the two denominations. But how is it possible, on this system, to indulge the hope of effecting a revolution in the public mind, when all the usual channels of communication are cut off, and the means of rational conviction laid under an interdict? If the hearers of both denominations are bound to confine their attendance to teachers who will esteem it their duty to

confirm them in their respective persuasions, the transition to an opposite system may be deemed almost a miracle. It were more natural to suppose that, in this instance, as well as others of greater moment, "faith cometh by hearing," than that a crop should spring up, where no seed, or none but what is of an opposite kind, has been sown.

It is not a little curious to find it objected to the principles we are attempting to defend, that they are adapted to an imperfect, rather than a perfect, state of things; when the utility of the entire system of christianity, results entirely from such an adaptation, and is nothing more than a sublime and mysterious condescension to human weakness and imperfection. What is the gospel but a proposed alliance, in which infinite purity comes into contact with pollution; infinite justice, with human demerits; and ineffable riches, with hopeless penury? "Mixed communion," Mr. Kinghorn observes, "displays another genuine feature of error. It is only to be found (even on the concession of its warmest supporters) in that mingled state of things, which takes place between the first purity of the church, and the ultimate display of gospel light. In the times of the apostles it had no place; nor do we expect it will be found, when "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God."* Specious as this proposition

* Baptism a Term of Communion, p. 77.

may appear, it is in reality nothing but a truism. We both suppose infant baptism to be an innovation unknown in primitive times. But mixed communion means nothing else than the union of baptists and pædobaptists in the same religious society. To say, therefore, that no such practice was known in the times of the apostles, is to say that the two denominations were not united, while there was only one: a profound discovery, the merit of which we will not dispute with this author. But when he proceeds to remark, that it will be equally unknown in the period usually styled the latter-day glory, we must be permitted to remind him of a state incomparably superior, and to ask him whether he supposes his exclusive system will extend there; whether the pædobaptist, dying in the possession of his supposed error, is disqualified to join "the spirits of just men made perfect; to mingle with the general assembly of the church of the first-born?" If this is not affirmed, let him reflect on the enormous impropriety of demanding a greater uniformity amongst the candidates for admission into the church militant, than is requisite for a union with the church triumphant—of claiming from the faithful, while encompassed with darkness and imperfection, more harmony and correctness of sentiment, than is necessary to qualify them "to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in "the kingdom of God"—of pretending to render a

christian society an enclosure more sacred, and more difficult of access, than the abode of the Divine Majesty—and of investing every little baptist teacher with the prerogative of repelling from his communion, a Howe, a Leighton, or a Brainerd, whom the Lord of glory will welcome to his presence. Transubstantiation presents nothing more revolting to the dictates of common sense.

The blessedness of the future world is ever represented in scripture as the final end and scope of the christian profession: the doctrines which it embraces, the duties which it enjoins, are represented as terminating in that, as its ultimate object. Religion itself, in its most general nature, is necessary only in consequence of the relation which the subjects of it bear to a future state: "patient continuance in well doing" is requisite, because it is the only safe and legitimate way of aspiring "to glory, honour, and immortality;" and the utmost that can be said to enforce any particular branch of practice is, that it tends to prepare us for eternal felicity. The church of Christ is unquestionably ordained merely as one of the instruments of qualifying its members for the possession of eternal life: but for this, it would have had no existence; and, beyond this, we can conceive no end or purpose it was intended to accomplish. In a system of means, many things may be useful on account of their tendency to

facilitate the accomplishment of their object, which are not absolutely necessary. They may accelerate its attainment, or attain it with greater certainty than it could be effected in their absence. But since the necessity of means arises solely from their relation to the end, *that*, whatever it be, without which the end may certainly be secured, can never be affirmed to be *necessary*, without an absolute contradiction. Is the organization of the church, then, a means of obtaining eternal life? Is it ordained solely with a view of preparing man for a future state of felicity, or in order to secure some temporary and secular object? If it be allowed that it is the former alone which it is designed to obtain, to assert that baptism is necessary to qualify for communion, when communion itself is only necessary as a means of preparing us for heaven, which it is allowed may with certainty be obtained without baptism, is a flat contradiction. It is to affirm that what is not essential to the attainment of a certain end, is yet a necessary part of the order of means, which is palpably absurd.

Let it be remembered, that we are far from intending to insinuate that baptism is of little moment; or that a wanton inattention to this part of the will of Christ, is consistent with a well-founded assurance of salvation: our sole intention is to expose the inconsistency of supposing an involuntary mistake on this subject a sufficient

bar to communion, while it is acknowledged to be none to the participation of future blessedness.

Our opponents will probably remind us of the perfect unanimity which will prevail on this subject (in our apprehension) in the heavenly world. But when will this unanimity take place? will it be previous to an admission to the society of the blessed, or subsequent to that event? If it be subsequent, in receiving believers on the ground of their vital union with Christ, we follow the order of heaven, which our opponents invert: while we indulge the hope, that in consequence of coming into a closer contact with persons whose views on the subject of baptism are correct, they will be gradually induced to embrace them; firmly persuaded that whether this is the result or not, we incur no danger in following a celestial precedent. We are not surprised at our opponents making such high pretensions to purity in the discipline and economy of their churches; we only admire their modesty in not insisting on their loftiest and sublimest distinction, which consists in their societies being more select than heaven, and in its being more difficult to become a member of a baptist church than to be saved.

The reader is requested to remember the extraordinary positions which Mr. Kinghorn has been compelled to advance, in defence of his restrictive system. He will recollect, we hope, that he has

found it necessary to affirm that the most eminent saints, not excepting the illustrious army of martyrs, made no true profession of that religion for which they laboured, and for which, with a divine prodigality, they shed their blood; that though worthy of "walking with Christ in white," and of joining in the cry, "How long, O Lord, wilt thou avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" they gave no scriptural evidence of their faith, and were consequently not entitled to its privileges; and that their claim to christian communion was defeated, *not in consequence of any specific or peculiar connexion betwixt the two ordinances in question,* but solely on account of its being one of those privileges. He has found it necessary to assert, that the terms of communion and of salvation are both immutable; that, if baptism was ever necessary to salvation, it is so still; and consequently that an involuntary mistake respecting a branch of revelation, is equally criminal and dangerous with its wilful rejection. He has found it necessary to affirm that pædobaptists are not received into the christian dispensation, although he expresses his confident expectation of their being interested in its blessings, and justified by faith in its promises. These are but a scanty specimen of the wild and eccentric paradoxes into which this writer has been betrayed, while, in quest of new discoveries, and resolved to project an *original* defence of strict communion,

he has quitted the sober path of his predecessors.

In some of the leading points of the argument, he has totally abandoned what Mr. Booth considered as forming his strong hold. Thus, though he evinces an extreme reluctance to appear to coincide with the writer of these sheets in any thing, he in fact concedes all that he contended for, respecting the essential difference betwixt the baptism of John and that of Christ, and entertains no doubt that the twelve disciples at Ephesus were rebaptized. Thus the *palmarium argumentum* of his venerable predecessor is relinquished. Mr. Booth contended, that though the pædobaptists are *received* in the sense the apostle intended in that expression, their right to the Lord's supper cannot be inferred; Mr. Kinghorn denies that they *are;* and thus the two champions are at variance, *toto cœlo,* on the interpretation of the passages chiefly concerned in this controversy. As these passages* form a principal part of the gist of the debate, the intelligent reader is requested carefully to examine Mr. Kinghorn's mode of interpretation; and should it appear to be loaded with insuperable difficulties, it may with confidence be inferred, that the cause of strict communion, were it liable to no other objection, is untenable. He had too much acumen to reject Mr. Booth's solution of the

* Rom. xiv. 1. xv. 7.

difficulty, could it have been plausibly supported. Conscious it could not, he has attempted to substitute another, which is accompanied with still greater, though perhaps not quite such obvious, inconveniences.

> Dextrum Scylla latus, lævum implacata Charybdis
> Obsidet . . . . . .

The writer is far from anticipating a speedy or sudden revolution in the sentiments of his brethren, as the consequence of his efforts in this controversy. He is contented to await the slow operation of time, in extinguishing the prejudices which time alone has produced; conscious that bodies of men are peculiarly tenacious of their habits of thinking, and that it is wisely ordained, that the conquest achieved by just and enlightened principles should be firm and durable, in proportion to the tardiness of their progress. Another generation must probably rise up, before the rust of prejudice is sufficiently worn off to leave room for the operation of reason, and the exercise of free inquiry on this subject. Our opponents, aware that a current has already set in, which threatens, at no very distant period, to sweep away their narrow and contracted system, are exerting every effort to stop it, but in vain:

> Labitur, et labetur, in omne volubilis ævum.

Mr. Kinghorn, while he acknowledges, with extreme regret, that the younger part of our

ministers are generally disposed unfavourably to the cause he has attempted to advocate, expresses his conviction, that further reflection and inquiry will correct the aberrations of their youth, and recall them to the ancient path. But when was it ever known that an extension of knowledge produced a contraction of feeling, or that the effect of a more extended survey of the vast sphere of philosophical and religious speculation, was to magnify the importance of sectarian peculiarities? He anticipates this effect chiefly from the perusal of ecclesiastical history; a profound acquaintance with which is to put them in possession of the marvellous secret, that mixed communion was unknown in the ages which succeeded the universal prevalence of infant baptism. The general agreement to consider that rite as an indispensable prerequisite to communion, during those ages, is to be received, it seems, as an oracle; while the baptism which they practised is discarded as a nullity, the sole ground on which it was supposed to be necessary deemed a most dangerous error, and innumerable other opinions and usages, of equal notoriety and extent, consigned to the moles and to the bats. He must have a wonderful faculty of sanguine anticipation, who supposes that an unfettered mind will reject the authority of antiquity in every particular, except that which suits his own humour; and after considering whatever distinguishes the ecclesiastical economy of these

ages, from that of dissenting societies, as a striking instance of human weakness, stop short in the career of reprobation just at the point he is pleased to prescribe. Such a procedure would be (as Cicero observes on another occasion) not to argue, but to divine; and it would be just as reasonable, after making a collection of all the peculiar opinions and practices of christian antiquity, to determine by lot which of them should be received.

Far from indulging the apprehension of a retrograde motion from enlarged and liberal, to narrow and contracted principles, we have every reason to conclude, that the polar ice once broken, they will circulate to a much wider extent; and the revolution which has already commenced amongst those who are destined to guide the public mind, shortly produce a powerful effect on the people, who never fail, sooner or later, to follow the impulse of their public teachers. As it is this which gave rise to the present practice, so it is still by a sort of incantation, by mustering the shades of the mighty dead, of Booth and Fuller especially, who are supposed to cast a dark and frowning aspect on the petulance of modern innovation, that it is chiefly supported; and, with all due respect to the talents of Mr. Kinghorn, it may be confidently affirmed, that, but for the authority of these worthies, his weapons would produce as little execution as the dart of Priam.

Deference to great names is a sentiment which

it would be base to attempt to eradicate, and impossible, were it attempted. But, like other offsprings of the mind, it is at first rude and ill-shapen. It makes no selection, no discrimination—it retains the impress of its original, entire, just as it was made: it is a vague undistinguishing admiration, which consecrates in a mass all the errors and deformities, along with the real excellencies, of its object. Time only, the justest of all critics, gives it correctness and proportion, and converts what is at first merely the action of a great upon an inferior mind, into an enlightened and impartial estimate of distinguished worth. The effect produced by coming into an intimate contact with a commanding intellect, is of a mixed nature; it subdues and enslaves the very persons whom it enlightens, and almost invariably leaves a portion of its sediment, where it deposits its wealth. It must be placed at a certain distance before we derive from it all the pure defecated good it is capable of imparting; and with all my admiration of the inestimable men already mentioned, and my conviction of the value of their services, I am persuaded many years must elapse before we entirely surmount the effects of a long-continued dictatorship.

When the views of baptism, by which we are distinguished as a denomination, are once exonerated from the odium arising from the practice we have been opposing, and the prejudices which

it has necessarily occasioned have subsided, we may justly presume that the former will be examined with more impartiality; nor is it possible to assign a reason for their having made so limited a progress, besides the extreme disgust inspired by this most unchristian and unnatural alliance. It is too much to expect an enlightened public will be eager to enroll themselves amongst the members of a sect, which displays much of the intolerance of popery, without any portion of its splendour; and prescribes, as the pledge of conversion, the renunciation of the whole christian world. While the vestibule is planted with the most repulsive forms, while *sedent in limine Dirœ*, few will be intrepid enough to enter.

On Mr. Kinghorn's system, which reprobates the attendance of the members of baptists and pædobaptists upon the ministry of each other, as a dereliction of principle, to calculate the ages which must, in all probability, elapse, ere our principles obtain a general prevalence, would form an amusing problem. The Hindoo chronology, which assigns to its fabulous dynasties millions and millions of years, might furnish a specimen of the scale on which such a calculation should proceed; and unless some such passion is expected to seize the members of other communities, as impelled the queen of Sheba to come from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, the projected revolution must be pronounced, in the

absence of miracles, impossible. What can be the motive of the advocates of strict communion, for studiously presenting every possible obstacle to the exclusive diffusion of our principles? We might be almost tempted to conjecture, that they were afraid of losing their title to the appellation of a "little flock," or that they consider the baptist denomination as an order of nobility or of knighthood, whose dignity is impaired in proportion as it is diffused. Be this as it may, the spirit of the age, distinguished by the superior expansion of its views, and the extensive cooperation of all sects and parties in the promotion of objects of public utility,—the little success which has accompanied the narrow and restrictive system,—the dictates of scripture, and the movements of that divine charity which those dictates have impressed, —all invite us to "consider our ways," to retrace our steps, and endeavour to draw our fellow-christians "by the cords of love, and the bands of a man." When we have learned to "make no difference," where the Searcher of hearts makes none; when we shew an alacrity in embracing all who love Jesus Christ, as members of the same mystical body,—when, in conformity to the genius of christianity, there is with us neither Jew nor Greek, neither baptist nor pædobaptist, but Christ is all in all,—the reasons on which our peculiar practice is founded, will, in all probability, meet with a very different reception from what has

hitherto attended them, accompanied, as they have been, with a system of impotent oppression, and unmerited contumely. But whether these expectations, to their full extent, are realised or not, we shall, at least, improve ourselves, wipe off the reproach of bigotry and intolerance, and rise in the esteem of a religious and enlightened public, by convincing them that our zeal for a ceremonial institution has not betrayed us into a forgetfulness that "love is the fulfilling of the law."

Thus have I endeavoured to reply to the reasoning of my opponent on this subject: whether my answer will be deemed by a discerning public conclusive or otherwise, I trust they will be convinced that no attempt has been made to evade the force of his arguments, nor any thing passed over in silence, to which he can be supposed to attach the least degree of importance. My anxiety to leave nothing untouched, which bears any relation to the merits of the controversy, has extended this reply beyond my wishes and my expectation; conceiving it better to incur the charge of tediousness, than that of discussing a polemical point of high importance, in a slight and superficial manner. The mode of establishing a doctrine in opposition to prevailing opinions and prejudices, is necessarily much more circuitous than the strict laws of reasoning require, in exhibiting its evidence to the understanding at a subsequent period. In the militant state of a doctrine, it is generally found

necessary to incur frequent repetitions, to repre sent the same idea in a variety of lights, and to encounter a multitude of petty cavils and verbal sophisms, which, in its farther progress, sink into oblivion. When, in consequence of a series of discussions, a doctrine is firmly rooted in the public mind, the proof by which it is sustained may be presented, without impairing its force, in a more compact and elegant form; and the time, I am persuaded, is not very remote, when it will be matter of surprise that it should have been thought necessary to employ so many words in evincing a truth, so nearly self-evident, as that which it is the object of the writer of these pages to establish. The flimsy sophistry by which it is attempted to be obscured, and the tedious process of reasoning opposed to these attempts, will be alike forgotten, and the very existence of the controversy remembered only among other melancholy monuments of human imperfection.

Some acceleration of that period the author certainly anticipates from his present and his former productions, though he is fully aware that the chief obstacles which impede its approach are such as it is not in the power of argument alone to subdue. Reasoning supplies an effectual antidote to mere speculative error, but opposes a feeble barrier to inveterate prejudice, and to that contraction of feeling, which is the fruitful parent of innumerable mistakes and misconceptions in

religion. There is no room, however, for despondency; for, as the dictates of christian charity will always be found to coincide with the justest principles of reason, the first effect of inquiry will be to enlighten the mind, the second to expand and enlarge the heart; and when the Spirit is poured down from on high, he will effectually teach us that God is *Love*, and that we never please him more than when we embrace with open arms, without distinction of sect or party, all who bear his image.

END OF VOL. II.

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Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 02 January, 2016